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ABSTRACT

This document contains eight papers on social literacies across communities, cultures, and contexts in Australia. "Social Literacies" (Jean Searle) is an introduction to the other papers, which each report on small action research projects examining how particular groups of people use literacy. "Recognising Shifting Delivery Modes: Rethinking Initial Adult Literacy Assessment for Flexible Delivery" (Angela Hill and Susan Hubbard) discusses a study of good practice in initial literacy assessment. "Lifelong Learning, Not a Band AID Solution: A Critical Solution to Multiple Literacies" (Marian Horton and David Horton) discusses a project assessing the need to renew and develop an alternative curriculum module. "Examining the Accounts of Homeless People's Needs to Determine a Role for Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Training" (Geraldine Castleton, Rosemary Jewell, Letitia Whitmore, and Marya McDonald) relates the procedures and findings of a project to identify homeless people's literacy and numeracy needs. "An Investigation into the Level of Literacy Support Skills Needed by Queensland Workers in Youth Work Practice" (Dale Johnson) focuses on the skills needed by youth workers responsible for performing basic literacy assessment and referral into work practice vocational training. "Literacy and Numeracy Skills of Truants and Underage School Leavers" (Irena Morgan-Williams) shares the findings of a project that involved 15 case studies designed to identify the literacy and numeracy needs of truants and dropouts. "Stradbroke Island Literacy Project" (Christine Seabrook) and "Stradbroke Island Literacy Project: Stage 2" (Lindy Freeman and Christie F. Seabrook) report on a literacy project developed especially for members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Each paper contains references. (MN)

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ADULT LITERACY RESEARCH NETWORK

SOCIAL LITERACIES ACROSS COMMUNITIES, CULTURES & CONTEXTS

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Adult Literacy Research Network Node for Queensland

Social Literacies
across Communities, Cultures and Contexts

Edited by Jean Searle

The National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia

Social Literacies

Edited by Jean Searle

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Editor's notes

The formats, styles and bibliographic conventions, while internally consistent, represent the variety of conventions presented by the research teams.

Chapter

1

Social Literacies

Jean Searle

Introduction

This book brings together a series of reports on small action research projects each of which was concerned with how a particular group of people use literacy. Although the reports cover the social literacies of people from a range of cultures, communities and contexts, what they all have in common is the underpinning concept of literacy practices being embedded within social settings. As Barton and Hamilton (1998: 6-7) argue, "literacy practices are the general cultural ways of utilising written[1] language which people draw upon in their lives. ...[these] practices are the social processes which connect people with one another, and they include shared cognitions represented in ideologies and social identities". So, for Barton and Hamilton, as well as the researchers represented in this book, the focus is not so much on literacy as a set of individual attributes, but more on 'social literacies' or those practices which allow individuals to relate to each other, within groups or within their community. The groups and communities represented in the following reports include homeless people, disadvantaged youth, including truants and early school leavers, Band A English language and literacy learners from a range of cultural backgrounds, students working in flexi-mode, as well as Indigenous people. For many of the researchers, the starting point for their projects was their concern with meeting individual needs, but rather than assuming what those needs might be, they investigated what the people themselves deemed to be important. This approach to social literacy research is described by Brian Street in his the introduction to 'The Social Uses of Literacy' (Prinsloo and Breier, 1996).

> *Instead of privileging the particular practices familiar in their own culture, researchers now suspend judgement as to what constitutes literacy among the people they are working with until they are able to understand what it means to the people themselves, and from which social contexts reading and writing derive their meaning. (pp.2-3)*

So, the purpose of this chapter is to introduce each project report and discuss its contribution to a broadening understanding of 'social literacies'. However, it is first necessary to present a brief overview of the history of the Queensland Adult Literacy Research Network Node to provide the context within which the action research projects were conducted.

Historical overview

In 1995, Adult Literacy Research Network Nodes were established in each state and the Northern Territory, as part of the National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia (formerly the Languages Institute of Australia). The Queensland node was hosted by the Faculty of Education at Griffith University, under the directorship of Dr Joy Cumming. Advised by a Steering Committee, which included cross-sectoral representation from most regions of Queensland, as well as Union and QCAL representation, the node focused on promoting collaborative research between adult literacy practitioners and researchers in Higher Education. This was achieved through funding a small number of action research projects and commissioning a series of Research into Practice booklets to inform and support the work of adult literacy practitioners. In 1997 the NLLIA was restructured at the national level thus becoming Language Australia and in Queensland Joy Cumming was joined by Jean Searle as Co-Directors of the node. However, the focus of the Queensland node continued to be one of facilitation of links between research and practice, among practitioners, academics, and policy-makers. In this way the Node hoped to fill a gap in the professional development of 'practitioners as researchers' through a mentoring process.

In 1995, the Queensland Adult Literacy Research Network Steering Committee recognised the need for an examination of the critical changes affecting assessment in adult literacy and numeracy following the implementation of competency curricula and the National Reporting System. As a result six small action research projects were funded and the reports were compiled into a report *Adult Literacy and Numeracy: Assessing Change* (Cumming & van Kraayenoord, 1996). Not only did the research projects themselves provide valuable professional development for all those involved, but they also created much interest within the field and the broader educational research community.

By 1997/1998 the adult literacy field was being affected by the changes to the delivery and accreditation of training introduced by the new Liberal government. The changes included the implementation of the Modern Australian Apprenticeship and Traineeship System (MAATS) which subsumed the former Australian Vocational Training System (AVTS) and resulted in an increased blurring of the distinction between apprenticeships and traineeships. In addition, there were sweeping changes to Employment Services and the provision of Commonwealth funded literacy programs, particularly Labour Market Programs. Following the success of the initial small grants projects, the Queensland ALRN Steering Committee decided to again call for expressions of interest in conducting action research to investigate some of these issues. Assessment is always a major issue in adult literacy and numeracy, but in the light of the government changes, the following additional areas were identified as being of key interest and importance to current adult literacy education:

- literacy demands of MAATS,
- causations of Adult Literacy deficiences,
- cross cultural issues in evaluation, and
- cultural issues in self paced learning.

The list was not considered to be exhaustive or exclusive, the only constraint being that the proposals should be for collaborative research (researchers and practitioners) and be achievable in terms of scope and time. With the exception of MAATS, each of the areas was addressed in the ensuing action research projects.

1997-1998 action research project reports

In all, six projects were funded. While two projects focused on particular aspects of assessment and curriculum development, it is perhaps a sign of the times that another three considered the needs of the homeless and disadvantaged youth. Finally, one project revolved around the assessment of the literacy and numeracy needs within an Indigenous community and the development of a model of culturally appropriate pedagogy. This project team received follow-up funding in order to implement a culturally appropriate integrated literacy and vocational education training program.

Reflecting the previously mentioned changes to adult literacy provision, the research undertaken by Angela Hill, Susan Hubbard and their colleagues concentrated on assisting practitioners to analyse their practice in relation to the initial assessment of students being referred to flexible modes of provision. They argue that traditional methods of initial assessment are no longer appropriate to determine if students have the requisite skills to access distance modes, self-access modes or mixed modes of delivery. Other factors such as the increased use of technology in delivery and the availability and cost of provision must also come into the equation. All of these issues imply that initial assessment practices need to include consideration of the different learning and metacognitive strategies required by new modes delivery and new technologies. However, reference is also made to some of the difficulties in trying to map learners' strategies to the statements of competence in relation to learning as outlined in the National Reporting System (NRS). The ensuing discussion is timely in highlighting the need for all of us to reflect on our practice and to consider the implications of how students learn using new technologies and modes of delivery.

David and Marion Horton are also concerned with reflecting on practice, this time in relation to language learning and in particular meeting the needs of learners enrolled in CSWE 1. They cite Vale, Scarino and McKay (1991: 90) as stating that "there is no such thing as an ideal curriculum for all learners at all times, and teachers are, therefore, constantly engaged in the process of refining curriculum". David and Marion are concerned at the potential for a narrow interpretation of the CSWE curriculum with its focus on written language and insufficient time allowed for the development of oracy. CSWE 1 translates as NRS Level 3, therefore, unlike many adult literacy curricula (and the NRS itself) there are no lower entry levels. In addition, within the local context, students who do not achieve a credential (that is not all competences are achieved in one skill level) are required to repeat the same module. So, the purpose of this action research project was to continue work that was already underway with a group of teachers and learners, and to develop a new 'Multiple Literacies Module' (MLM). The research was underpinned by the work of Street (1995) in stressing the plurality of 'literacies' as social practices, that of Knobel and Lankshear (1995) in addressing learners' diversity and a socially-situated view of language (Halliday, 1985).

Included in this report is a clear representation of the phases of action research which would form a good model for other researchers. Also, the continuum from spoken to written language (Halliday, 1985) is clearly articulated, while reference to excerpts from classroom transcripts allows for a discussion of how the teacher-researchers scaffold language use. What comes through strongly in this report is the social nature of language and the importance of understanding affective issues. For example focusing on form-filling, while useful for settlement purposes, requires learners to recount biographical details which, for trauma victims, engenders further stress and re-traumatisation. So, for L2 language learners, who are often not literate in their first language, particularly those from backgrounds which are culturally and educationally very different from the Anglo-Australian culture, the starting point is language in context, supported by non-linguistic or para-linguistic elements, to engage learners in joint constructions of text. In addition, use is

made of authentic texts and tasks and built into each MLM competency is a participatory component to enable learners to respond with their opinion. In keeping with critical language awareness and critical literacy studies, the researchers recognise adult life experiences and from observations of the learners in the study, the researchers have begun to question some previous assumptions about second language acquisition and the values associated with different types of learning and learners. In so doing they have made an important contribution to literacy and language teaching and learning.

Several other researchers also address the issue of values in relation to education and learning, particularly in relation to barriers to learning, the appropriacy of mainstream forms of education and training for some groups, and the prioritising of needs. For example, the report by Geraldine Castleton, Rosemary Jewell and others, which focuses on the homeless, begins by discussing the concept of 'need'. They argue that definitions of need depend on how the subject is positioned, that is a bureaucrat may talk about 'unmet need' whereas community members may refer to 'demand'. The researchers draw on census and survey data to report on 'apparent need', and on the results of local surveys and organisational reports to indicate 'perceived need'. However, they point out that very seldom are the recipients (or potential recipients) of literacy provision asked to consider their own 'expressed needs'.

In accounting for homelessness, particularly in relation to young people, the researchers reported that several informants saw a link between eviction from home plus exclusion from school, and homelessness. These conditions also accounted for the low literacy and numeracy levels of some informants, an issue which is taken up later in the report by Irena Morgan-Williams. For Indigenous respondents the link between lack of schooling, low literacy levels and homelessness was attributed to "schooling itself just being too difficult", a finding which is corroborated by data presented in the report by Christine Seabrook.

However, while literacy was perceived to be important for homeless people, it was not the most significant issue in their lives, nor the cause of homelessness. This is where Street's caution, cited earlier, is apposite. In this project the researchers suspended judgement about what might constitute literacy among homeless people in order to understand what it meant to the people themselves. They found that although some homeless people had low levels of literacy this was not important to them as many had developed networks within and beyond the welfare centres, in which one person would act as 'literacy broker' as part of a mutual exchange of skills and practices. The 'literacy broker' would act in much the same way as the 'literacy mediator' described by Malan (in Prinsloo & Breier, 1996: 116) who has "an insider understanding of local discourse and the ability to reshape the intentions and style of formal written discourse". Geraldine and colleagues argue therefore, that rather than focus on literacy provision as an access issue, more attention should be paid to social change. Based on interviews with the homeless, it is reported that very few are active job seekers or likely to access training. As a result, the focus must be on social transformation, through broadening the intersections among various welfare agencies and literacy providers. This would allow for the possibility of literacy being linked to health and welfare issues, as one aspect of 'communities of practice'.

The lack of meaningful cross-sectoral interactions is also raised as an issue by Dale Johnson and the Youth Sector Training Council in relation to literacy. Dale was concerned at the amount of anecdotal evidence which suggested that a substantial number of disadvantaged young people had low literacy and numeracy skills but that the priority for many youth workers was to support the young person through times of crisis. In the study reported here, the Youth Training Council surveyed a total of 41 youth sector organisations throughout Queensland, in relation to the perceived literacy needs, level of existing literacy support, barriers to support, and the literacy and numeracy training needs of youth workers. The responses point to some major issues to be addressed. Despite confirmation

of large numbers of young people with low literacy and numeracy skills, 29% of programs offered no response. Dale suggests that one reason for this is that literacy and numeracy assessment and referral are not recognised as being part of youth work. In addition, in many areas (particularly rural and isolated) there is a lack of appropriate literacy programs for young people. It is also pointed out that there is no specific reference to spoken and written language competency statements in either the Youth Sector Industry standards or the Community Services national competency standards.

Irena Morgan-Williams was also concerned at the relationship between low literacy and numeracy levels and disadvantage, particularly the number of young people in one local government area who appeared to be neither at school nor in the workforce. These young people appeared to be truants or under-age school leavers. Of major concern to various interest groups such as local schools, youth sector organisations, parents, and providers of education and training, were the relationships among perceived low levels of literacy and numeracy, social and economic progress, personal growth, and possible life choices. Irena presents her findings through a series of case studies which graphically portray how vulnerable, marginalised and often inarticulate these young people are. Major issues resulting from these studies include, firstly, the importance of the home environment, both the family's socio-economic status and attitude to schooling. It appears that lack of success at school together with negative perceptions of schooling are good predictors of truanting or early school-leaving. Secondly, many young people are not identified as having 'dropped out' of school. The implications for politicians and bureaucrats are that it must be recognised that mainstream schooling is not appropriate for all students and that using the Youth Allowance to force young people to return to school for 'more of the same' is unproductive. What is required is an allocation of resources in order to provide alternative forms of 'schooling'. Thirdly, while some students do access community youth support schemes, often youth workers do not recognise literacy or numeracy support as being of a high priority – a point also made by Dale Johnson.

The issue of whether participation in education and training is one of access is also taken up by Christine Seabrook in the report on her project which investigated the literacy needs of Indigenous people on Stradbroke Island. Christine suggests that for many Indigenous people the question is not so much an increase in access, but the need to address the form the education takes. For example, programs need to respect and value the diversity of peoples and be based on building communities. So the focus of this project became the development of a culturally appropriate model for the delivery of literacy learning for Indigenous people in order to meet community needs. A collaborative approach was taken to planning in order to identify those community literacy practices on which to focus, in this case, meeting procedures. This collaboration continued through the implementation phase in Stage 2. Overall the authors provide a useful model for community training and development.

Other researchers (cited in Prinsloo & Brier, 1996; Horsman, 1998) who have worked with the homeless, disadvantaged youth, and other marginalised groups, have stated that they are conscious of coming from a position of priviledge to working with people with amazing needs and barriers to learning. Similarly, people from very different cultures, whether Indigenous people who have felt marginalised in mainstream schooling, or migrants who are often not literate in their first language, and may be the victims of trauma, all have varying needs in relation to their communities of practice. Often they are fighting with issues of access when there is a lack of interest by those in positions of power. In addition, as Geraldine Castleton and Dale Johnson have found, it is questionable whether literacy education is what people want when they are threatened by change. To many homeless and disadvantaged young people, the concept of 'choice' does not exist when they are beset by the multiple problems of everyday life. For them, choice is associated with middle class

values, so 'we', as researchers and practitioners, need to question what we are doing. Are we working within our own discourses, seeing literacy as a 'social good' and excluding other discourses? The theme which emerges strongly from the reports presented here is the urgent need for networking across sectors. As literacy teachers we must work within the community, across cultures and contexts, and with community, youth, health, and social workers to develop holistic programs. In this way, the focus turns to identifying the social literacies which will enable an individual to deal with the complexities of everyday life.

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1 Barton and Hamilton focused on those everyday literacies associated with written language, whereas the focus for the projects reported here was much broader.

Chapter

2

Recognising shifting delivery modes: Rethinking initial adult literacy assessment for flexible delivery

Angela Hill and Susan Hubbard

Introduction

When the National Training Reform Agenda began to change the shape of adult literacy provision in Australia, the TAFE National Staff Development Committee (1993) developed a module entitled *Assessment, Placement and Referral.* This module was delivered to a considerable number of adult literacy professionals across Australia. The theory underpinning this model, reflected 'good practice' principles in initial assessment. Murphy (1990) summarised the principles and process of this good practice – an informal interview, with an underlying structure which attempted to gather information about literacy skills and ensured development of an appropriate learning process.

The initial interview format, reflected as Lee and Wickert (1995) discuss, the discourse of flexibility to meet the need of the individual.

> *The individual student's perceptions, needs, aspirations and learning style should determine the type of tuition s/he receives*

The "Murphy model" reflected an initial assessment method that captured the needs of the field in the eighties and early nineties. During this period, Adult Basic Education provision, while diverse in setting, was also relatively uniform in its mode of delivery. Learners could be offered places in one-to-one provision, small group provision or larger classes, depending on their needs and goals. In general the mode of delivery used was face to face.

National competition policy and user choice policies over the last four years have encouraged major providers to consider cheaper modes of delivery in order to lower the cost of the price per student contact hour. In the TAFE sector, there has been increased emphasis on the use of self access centres and self paced print material. At the same time the expansion in technology has encouraged teachers to use other flexible delivery modes, including audiographics and videoconferencing, as well as computer assisted packages.

Adult literacy teachers no longer approach the initial assessment of students without "preconceived notions" about the delivery mode available. Student need is no longer the key determinant in placing students in ABE provision. In the late nineties, institutional constraints are very obvious to teachers. Each delivery mode is costed differently and the teacher is critically aware of the constraints imposed in the placement of each new student.

While this is a major cause of tension and a site of resistance for teachers, initial assessment of an adult literacy student for multiple modes of delivery requires a considerable rethink.

This action research project was designed to investigate what good practice in initial literacy assessment might look like, given the multiple modes of delivery now available for students; and given a range of institutional constraints. Specifically, the action research project attempted to identify the following:

- What information will teachers need to collect in order to appropriately place students in selected modes of delivery?
- What are the learning strategies required for the different modes of delivery?
- During an initial interview, how is it possible to identify the learning strategies a learner uses?

Flexible Delivery – Coming, ready or not

The National Training Reform Agenda was designed to address a national economic crisis, and was based on the tenuous assumption that skills formation is central to economic restructuring and a growth economy. The principles are:

- competency based
- national consistency in training
- flexible delivery
- equity and access
- industry driven.

Flexible delivery is central to the training reform agenda and is actively sought by industry in order to increase their competitiveness in an increasingly deregulated economy. *Flexible Delivery: A National Framework for Implementation in TAFE* (1992) was designed to assist TAFE systems and institutions in planning and implementing flexible delivery as part of the goals of the National Training Reform Agenda. It defined flexible delivery as:

> *...an approach to vocational education and training which allows for the adoption of a range of learning strategies in a variety of learning environments to cater for differences in learning styles, learning interests and needs, and variations in learning opportunities*

Flexible delivery is characterised by:

- flexibility in terms of entry, program components, modes of learning and points of exit;
- learner control and choice regarding content, sequence, time, place and method of learning;
- appropriate learner support systems;
- application of learning technologies where appropriate;
- access to information on courses and services;
- access to appropriate learning resources; and
- flexible assessment processes.

Flexible delivery finds expression in many ways:

- delivery at a variety of locations;
- resource-based learning with support; and
- application of technology to enhance delivery or improve access opportunities.

Modes of delivery in Adult Basic Education have changed dramatically in the light of these developments. Common delivery modes now include:

- classroom based
- distance learning

- workplace learning
- home tutor
- individual tutor support
- self-access
- on line
- audiographics
- videolinq.

As well as these, there are mixed modes of delivery including combinations of all of the above.

Thach and Murphy (1995) point out that due to advances in technology, cost-cutting and changing demographics, distance learning and consequently flexible delivery is now a major growth area. They identified multiple competencies that were required of practitioners within this field. No longer is it appropriate for the learner to assume the traditional role based around classroom inputs. Flexible delivery challenges traditional models of teaching and raises issues concerning learning strategies that will be effective for the individual to access effective flexible delivery modes. It also involves matching the learning strategies with different learning styles, ensuring access to appropriate resources, flexible assessment, applying appropriate technologies and appropriate learner support systems.

As Singh et al (1997) discuss, flexible delivery should "not be just about compensating for the lack of a teacher due to funding constraints "but rather" be viewed as an important and innovative means by which learners and teachers can share control of the education process" (1997:5). Adult literacy teachers then, need to be critically aware of the new range of educational processes now available and consider how best they can work with learners to create new forms of learning partnerships.

Assistance in understanding the nature of these new partnerships within a paradigm of flexible delivery, has been limited. Many TAFE teachers argue that they have not been well supported in the transition to flexible delivery (Kell, et al: 1997). The ANTA (1997) project on flexible delivery, noted that every interviewee in TAFE thought that the concept of flexible delivery was not well understood in their organisation. The National Flexible Delivery Taskforce Report (ANTA 1996) identified that staff development concerning flexible delivery was poor, they found evidence of some training, which tended to be ad hoc and variable, but no national approach to staff development.

More recently, Warner et al (1998) highlight the confusion apparent throughout the whole range of VET stakeholders as to the nature of flexible delivery and note how overwhelmingly learners preferred a face-to face mode of delivery. Of further significance to this study, was the finding that Australian VET learners have poor levels of readiness for self directed learning and many possess low levels of confidence in themselves as autonomous learners. They recommend the need for providers to develop a precourse screening process, in order to ensure that the students have the necessary skills to complete their courses, especially when the course is to be delivered flexibly.

The notion of precourse screening is not new to Adult Basic Education courses, or indeed many vocational courses. The remainder of this report considers just how this precourse screening or initial literacy assessment might look in an Adult Basic Education program, given the new range of skills, particularly learning strategies required to successfully develop learning partnerships in flexible delivery.

Research Methodology

Action research is a responsive form of inquiry that has gained momentum during the last twenty years. As the name suggests, it is concerned with the outcomes of the action and the research at the same time. The action research methodology used is based on a cyclical model of action research proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), with the elements of: plan ..... action ..... observe .... reflect –

1 Plan to improve what is already happening in a real life context
2 Act to implement this plan
3 Observe the effects of action in the context in which it occurs
4 Reflect on these effects as a basis for further planning, subsequent action, etc.

The planning stage includes raising issues within the research question and is embedded within the action and reflection.

Action research is a participatory and collaborative approach that enables people to reflect on and work towards improvement of their own practice, while at the same time addressing the research questions that have been identified. It avoids the traditional dichotomy between the researcher and the teacher. Research is grounded in a real social context with teachers and researchers working together as collaborators. This approach is becoming more common and is appealing to teachers as a form of inquiry because their skills and knowledge are valued. Lasting change is more likely to happen if the participants feel that they are contributing to it and are valued in the process (Burns and Hood 1995). In this way teachers can theorise about their practice in relation to real situations and it is easier to be flexible and responsive to a situation as it arises.

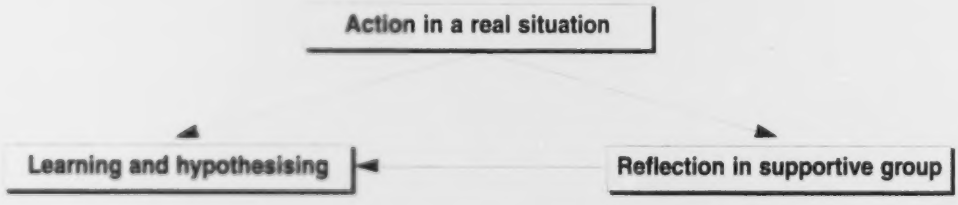
Action research is a systematic form of investigation that follows identified principles (Dick 1996):

cyclical – similar steps recur in a similar sequence
participative – everyone is involved as active participants in the research process
qualitative – it deals with qualitative as opposed to quantitative data
reflective – critical reflection upon process and outcomes are important elements

Action Learning

The action research was carried out using an action learning approach with the participants. The methodology that we have used in this research project is based upon the Action Learning approach proposed by Reginald Revans (1982:633): "the development of the self by the mutual support of equals". Action learning is a dynamic model of learning where people learn with and from each other in a small group, through the use of supportive questions, advice and criticism on real problems, in real conditions. The participants try out new ways of doing things, then observe and reflect upon what has happened, learn from it and make changes in a cyclical process.

The aim of this action learning project is that through critical self-reflection, questioning becomes more and more discriminating and it is therefore able to facilitate personal and



professional development (Lawrence, 1991). In order for self-reflection to be critical, appropriate support within and by the group is needed.

The action learning project was designed to take advantage of the following principles:

- Learners learn with and from each other
- Learning process is more effective when it takes place in the company of others who are involved in a similar exercise
- Learning process is more effective when it involves reflecting on a real problem
- Learning process is more effective when it involves trust and respect
- Learning process is more effective when it involves risk taking
- Learners are able to be critical when they are able to question the assumptions on which actions have been based
- A small group provides encouragement, support and stimulation as well as access to information and other resources
- External factors such as social interaction and cultural practices have a major impact on the process of learning
- Learners are curious to know how other people work
- Learning is an on-going process
- A small group provides opportunities to examine ideas afresh that otherwise might have been taken for granted.

Research Process

Step 1:

An action learning group was formed comprising three adult literacy practitioners from a TAFE Institute, a facilitator who was also a literacy practitioner and the principal researcher. All members of the action learning group were experienced literacy practitioners. The three practitioners from the TAFE regularly undertake initial literacy assessments and place learners into courses involving flexible delivery modes.

Practitioner 1

Delivering National Communications modules in the workplace to employees from the support services who have volunteered for the training. The delivery of the program is flexible, involving on the job and off the job training, including intensive workshops, 1-1 tuition and self paced activities. The mode of delivery is negotiated with the employer, learner and provider, around issues such as learner need, release time available to the employee and job requirements.

Practitioner 2

Coordinating and providing literacy and numeracy support to generally young people who are involved in a vocational course at certificate level. The support offered can include 1-1 provision outside the vocational classroom, using support materials including modified vocational tasks and using assistance offered in the classroom. The amount of support offered is constrained by the cost, time, support of the vocational teacher and availability of teacher/tutor.

Practitioner 3

Working in a Self Access Centre. The delivery mode is minimally assisted self paced activities with reviews and guidance from the teacher if requested. A range of learning technologies is also available for interested students, including video, computer and audio.

At the first meeting the action research question was considered and the action learning approach to be taken was discussed. All the participants had worked with each other and so the professional relationships on which to build had already been established. The action learning process was outlined and ethical issues involving social research were discussed. All of the participants were given an information sheet and required to complete an ethics form.

At the initial meeting each participant outlined their present initial literacy assessment practice and identified the training that they had had in relation to this. Any problems, concerns or constraints concerning initial literacy assessments were also raised.

Step 2:

The three teachers carried out an initial literacy assessment as part of their usual work and then met separately with the two researchers shortly afterwards to reflect on the assessment and raise issues from it.

Step 3:

The participants reflected on their initial assessments and looked at how they might be changed to elicit relevant information concerning the learning strategies needed in the particular mode of delivery. The action learning group focused on how learning strategies were being elicited through the initial assessment interview. As a group the learning strategies identified in the National Reporting System were looked at in terms of their relevance to the modes of delivery that each program offered. The process used by each teacher and the area that they worked in were looked at together, in the light of eliciting learning strategies and the type of placement that would follow.

Step 4:

The three teachers carried out another initial literacy assessment, having taken into account the need to look at relevant learning strategies. They again met separately with the two researchers shortly afterwards to reflect on the assessment and raise issues arising from it.

Step 5:

The action learning group met for a final discussion and reflection. For each work area the group focused on three questions: Who are the learners? What is the teacher's role? What learning strategies are required by the learner in the ensuing program?

Step 6:

The three teachers were then asked to review how being involved in the action learning group had affected their initial interview practice.

All individual interviews with TAFE staff were taped and summarised for analysis. The action learning group meetings were summarised and the notes circulated for comment. The notes also contained a statement of the agreed discussion points for the next meeting and any required preparation.

Training in initial assessment practices

The three literacy practitioners had all been exposed to some training or mentoring to develop initial assessment skills. One practitioner had completed the module on *Assessment Placement and Referral*, and then been mentored into the process. The second practitioner had used knowledge gained in formal training using the ASLPR and had then completed the Adult Literacy Teaching (ALT) Course which had included a component on initial assessment practice. The third and least experienced practitioner had received some background from the ALT course and was working closely with other staff when completing assessments.

All participants agreed at the outset of the action learning process that the process of carrying out initial assessment described by Murphy (1990), encapsulated their understanding of good practice in initial assessment.

Reviewing current practice

Following each participant completing an initial assessment, meeting with the researchers and then reviewing it within the action learning group, a number of issues were raised.

The action learning group immediately identified that the initial assessment conducted in the Self Access Centre did not comply with their expectations for good practice. The reasons were as follows:

- resources were not authentic
- minimal customisation of the assessment process for individual learners
- formulaic questions that could be perceived as threatening and framed within a deficit model of literacy development
- limited description of the Self Access Centre as a learning environment
- recording form for interview material was perceived as very official, authoritarian and school -like.
- not all the information collected in the interview was useful and some was deemed inappropriate
- appropriate information about the health and barriers to learning of the learner was absent.

Another discussion point confirmed the importance of sharing the assessment information with the learner and that they have ownership of it.

Unpacking learning strategies for the delivery modes

The action learning group identified the following learning strategies as critical for learner success within the delivery modes.

Delivery Mode	Learning Strategies/Skills required
Self Access Centre	Self-directed Self managed Self motivated Able to identify short term goals Able to draw on a variety of resources Awareness of support needs Independent Able to seek assistance
Learning Support	Able to identify preferred learning strategies Assess own need in relation to vocational course Consciously relate practical to theory and vice versa Draw on own experiences
Workplace delivery	Identify and negotiate preferred delivery mode and support level Goal identification Identify support level required Draws on wide range of workplace learning strategies

Developing an initial assessment to elicit learning strategies

The action learning group recognised that in most cases during initial assessment, they were not explicitly investigating learning strategies related to the delivery mode. The group considered and brainstormed possible ways to elicit learning strategies.
Suggestions included:

- generate open questions to investigate how a new skill is learnt in the workplace or other environment
- investigate good experiences in education and reiterate the components of learning
- present short scenarios (eg change in work or home routine) and try to elicit range of strategies drawn on by learner
- make explicit the skills required for different delivery modes and present options (eg Working in the Self Access Centre will require you to seek assistance from the teacher on duty. Will you feel comfortable asking for assistance from a teacher you do not know?)

These suggestions formed the basis of changes to each practitioner's approach to initial assessment.

Evaluating changes to initial assessment

The action learning group discussions prompted a major redesign of the assessment process in the self access centre. This included a revised and shortened proforma for recording information, the use of authentic texts, and questions were reconceptualised to allow for freer discussion.

All practitioners felt that the project had focussed their questioning in initial assessment to investigate learning strategies and particularly learning strategies required for their delivery mode. All profomas for recording information were revised and included a specific section related to learning strategies. The practitioner involved with learning support for vocational students developed a learning plan to be completed by the learner as part of the recording process. (See Appendix 1)

Discussion

The research project provided an excellent opportunity to review current initial assessment practice in the light of multiple delivery modes. As most TAFE workers would testify, the opportunity to plan, act observe and reflect in a supportive and systematic environment is not common. This process was highly valued by all the participants.

Echoing concerns outlined by McKenna (1998) that assessment practice in adult literary had been overshadowed by a preoccupation on reporting outcomes and less with the construction of suitable assessment tasks, the action research group acknowledged the apparent lack of awareness of benchmarks for quality initial assessment tasks in the Self Access Centre. In both the process of the action research group, and the dissemination of the research findings, it is anticipated that initial assessment practice at the Self Access Centre will undergo a major transformation.

Mapping to the National Reporting System

Two of the three practitioners were reporting to funding bodies using the National Reporting System (NRS). Mapping the learning strategies as outlined in the NRS document presented a range of problems to the group. The group noted the minimal nature of the NRS indicators of competence in the area of learning strategies, and also commented on the minimal guidance or information provided about using these indicators of competence. They also expressed concern at the lack of cohesion, and the development of the descriptors over the 5 levels. This was particularly problematic for the practitioner involved in workplace programs.

Practitioners noted the lack of professional development they had received in the use of the NRS learning strategies indicators of competence. Anecdotal and observational methods were used to assess students, but generally this area of competence received limited attention by practitioners. Increased use of the NRS as a reporting mechanism suggests a need to address practitioners lack of ease with these indicators, and there may also be a need to provide guidance in developing suitable assessment tasks.

Despite considerable effort by the researchers in this project, the origin of the learning strategies indicators of competence in the NRS remains unclear. It appears most likely that they were derived from McCormack & Pancini (1994), *Learning to Learn* guide for teachers, based on a cognitive psychology framework. The emphasis on meta-cognition in the framework, may explain the considerable emphasis on self managed and self directed learning.

Self-directed learning

When the action learning group considered the range of learning strategies required for successful participation in the range of delivery modes available, the NRS strategies and their emphasis on self-directed learning clearly framed their responses. Yet Brookfield (1985:10) argues it is "dangerous to say that adults' independence must be marked by highly regulated control over the purpose and the intent of their activities". As adult literacy teachers will testify, many learners can be engaged in purposeful learning without any real ability to specify the skills or knowledge that are attempting to acquire. Brookfield (1988) encourages adult educators to note the propensity of studies of self-directed learners in white middle class settings. In any development of initial literacy assessment, it is worthwhile to critically evaluate whether self-directedness, self management and explicit goal setting are the most valuable indicators of the learning strategies required for different delivery modes.

Conclusion

This small scale action research project has focussed on the need to rethink initial adult literacy assessment in the light of multiple delivery modes. As in the transition to flexible delivery across the entire adult and vocational education and training sector, adult literacy teachers are only beginning to address the range of issues related to "good practice" for changing delivery modes. Further explosions in the use of technology for literacy provision will inevitably compound the range of student options within institutional constraints. As discussed by Sobski (1997) in "both pedagogy and the means of delivery there need to be parallel shifts". Initial literacy assessment practice will need to be informed by these shifts if meaningful learning partnerships are to be maintained.

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Appendix 1

CONFIDENTIAL

Initial Assessment Interview for INTEGRATED LEARNING SUPPORT

NAME _____ ☐ M ☐ F

DOB _____ ☐ NESB ? ☐ ATSI

ADDRESS _____

_____

_____ PHONE _____

YEAR LAST ATTENDED SCHOOL _____

HIGHEST LEVEL ACHIEVED _____

COURSES SINCE SCHOOL _____

INTERESTS _____

_____

_____

WHAT DO YOU READ? ☐ signs ☐ maps ☐ ads ☐ newspaper

☐ comics ☐ magazines ☐ books ☐ manuals

☐ forms other _____

WHAT SORTS OF THINGS DO YOU WRITE? ☐ notes ☐ messages

☐ forms ☐ letters ☐ lists ☐ assignments

other _____

WHAT SORTS OF THINGS WILL YOU NEED TO READ AND WRITE IN YOUR COURSE? _____

_____

WORK EXPERIENCE/ if applicable _____

_____

LEARNING STRATEGIES

Past strategies _____

_____

Proposed strategies for training _____

_____

ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION THAT MIGHT BE USEFUL? _____

_____

A LEARNING PLAN

A learning plan should consider what you already do ***well.*** *It should also give you the opportunity to think ahead about what you* ***will do well*** *in your training.*

CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS

What strategies have you used to help you learn something new? Think about your schooling but also think about things you have learnt in your life.

List them below

eg Learning to drive a car – I got my parents to test me before I did my learners permit test

Now consider your training. Which of these strategies could be used in your training to get you through your modules successfully?

Now write down how you could apply these strategies to your study plan.

eg I could ask the teachers what I am doing ahead of time.
I could read my notes before the classes.

Chapter

3

Lifelong Learning, Not a Band AID Solution: a Critical Solution to Multiple Literacies

Marian Horton and David Horton

Many changes have taken place in language and ESL teaching in recent years, and they continue to occur... given that curriculum is always renewed in response to such changes, there is no such thing as an ideal curriculum for all learners at all times, and teachers are, therefore, constantly engaged in the process of refining curriculum..." *(Vale, Scarino & McKay, 1991, p. 90)*

The background to our project is as follows. In January 1996, TAFE Queensland implemented the Certificates in Spoken & Written English – CSWE (Mandis & Jones, 1992). A decision by management was taken to enrol all learners in these competency-based modules within the Adult Migrant English Programs (AMEP). Although not all learners fitted into the CSWE modules, nevertheless, they were enrolled because, at a system-level, it was a requirement to receive funding. The prospect of having to tender for funding and the changes in the training market drove an increasing emphasis on outcomes.

Action research was seen as a way of responding to the problem presented by a potentially narrow interpretation of the CSWE. This kind of research was chosen, because it would facilitate the goal of local understanding and help to bring about improvement in the local situation. It aimed to investigate the need for renewing and developing an alternative curriculum module, by documenting learners' progress which underpinned the entry level descriptors of the CSWE 1. Action research was undertaken over a period of 20 months by the authors, and included other teachers and learners. The findings provided the grounding for a new "Multiple Literacies Module" (MLM) and guidelines appended to it (see Appendix 1 for new module).

We used the term multiple literacies from July 1997 for a few reasons: firstly, to emphasise the multilingual backgrounds and plurality of the learners in the study. Perceptions common to the teaching centre reinforced the 'great divide' of learners into those who were literate and those who were illiterate or slow (Street 1995). Secondly, the literacies being done were from multiple categories (Knobel and Lankshear, 1995) to address learners' diversity. Some needed language to fulfil more immediate settlement needs, which could have been broadly categorized as functional; others desired more elementary technological applications, broadly defined as technological literacies; whilst the underlying thread throughout was an orientation to culture and a critical perspective. Thirdly, in emphasizing the plurality of literacy, Street (1995 p. 24) again suggests "a range of cognitive and social skills associated with orality and literacy equally". Therefore,

"multiple literacies" was used to emphasize learners' oral abilities in language, incorporating kinesics and other semiotics, by utilizing multiple approaches (which ideally can be *inclusive* of a diversity of learning styles).

Our research was prompted by the issue that we considered the current CSWE I competency descriptors as too difficult for mapping entry levels and incremental progress for certain kinds of learners, particularly Band A. It is important to note that we are not attacking the CSWE document in its entirety. Many descriptors can also be seen positively because they are broad enough to allow a flexibility in programming. However our concern is that there is not enough time for the learner to develop oracy to precede the written language competencies as currently described. We agree with Richards and Nowicki's (1998) intention "to reinstate the primacy of speech in order to redress the emphasis on written language in GBT (genre based teaching) to date" (p. 66).

In the broader context, only 8% of clients with limited formal education or a low level of literacy in their first language attained the target level III. Forty-three percent did not even meet the exit level requirements at the lower I and II levels of the CSWE (McNaught & McGrath 1997).

In reference to the limited gains of Band A learners in their study of literacy development, Hood and Kightley (1991) noted

> *It is evident that if measurement of language gain is made only in these terms (e.g. ASLPR or AMES Oral Proficiency Rating Scale) progress is very difficult to measure. Teachers gauge progress in terms of small steps achieved which may mark significant stages in the learning process, but which are difficult to show in terms of a discrete point scale. Alternative tools or criteria need to be developed to more adequately describe progress with low-oracy, low-literacy learners; criteria which would allow for the identification of gains in* non-linguistic *terms. (53) (our emphasis)*

Our research has been an effort to measure the *linguistic* progress of students of Adult ESOL learners of limited education background. This has extended findings from the Hood and Kightly study quoted above. Hood, as one of the authors of the CSWE, had been informed from the findings of their longitudinal research which tracked the literacy progress of six learners over intermittent periods averaging one year. McPherson (1997) in her report on Special Needs/Band A learners in the CSWE, had noted that teachers had requested to measure course outcomes in relation to linguistic information, rather than only the non-linguistic outcomes in the "orientation to learning" module of the CSWE (often suggested as the solution for these learners).

The CSWE document refocused attention on written language, where previously the main focus of ESL teaching had been on teaching oracy (through written worksheets). We propose that in practice, in our local context, this has tended to place too much emphasis on written language competencies for special needs learners, rather than allowing enough time to develop sufficient spoken language to precede this. If adequate descriptors do not underpin the CSWE 1 Certificate competencies for early literacy learners, then how does the teacher know where to start with many of these Band A learners?

In the Introduction to the CSWE, there is brief attention to learners with disparate skills in spoken and written language, describing them as needing "remedial skill development in a particular area" (NSW AMES , 1993, p. 24). This could be interpreted as placing an emphasis on *genre as skills*. Remediation is addressed through them being able to be registered in one of "three short intensive modules" which would lead to a statement of attainment. However, the modules are no different to the general certificate modules combined. The introduction states that students who "fail to achieve a credential because they were unable to achieve competencies in one skill area... can repeat the competencies in a module" although remediation may operate fairly and effectively for the upper levels of the Certificates. For example:

students may be assessed as being at Certificate II level in all skills except reading and writing. These students can undertake a Certificate I Reading and Writing Module and can then enter the broader curriculum framework at Certificate II level (NSW AMES, p.11).

Although it may not have been intended, this meant that in our local context, Certificate I students received "more of the same" in which they were not yet competent, repeating prescribed topics, rather than an alternative kind of language learning experience, which could progress learning through fresh materials and approaches.

***Figure 1** above: (February 1995 – prior to study). Female student after 500 + hours of previous English literacy classes. Typical expected result for a student of limited education background in L1 (2-3 years approx.) [omissions to protect confidentiality – able to spell first name and address correctly] (34 years old)*

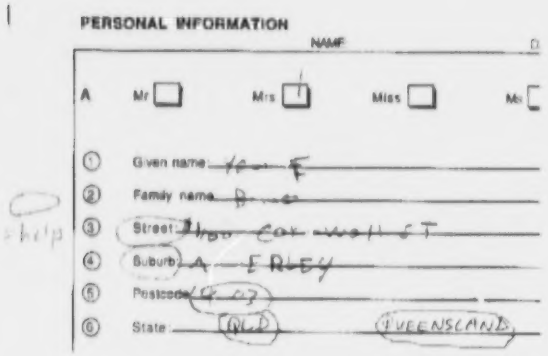

***Figure 2:** (September 1995 – prior to study) another student (male) with 6 years of schooling in L1 – sample of previous expected results after approx. 400 hrs of English and literacy classes at the centre.*
Note: help given to read and complete form. (29 years old)

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Learner Characteristics

The Certificates in Spoken and Written English define Band A as the following:

> **BAND A: Slower pace**
> *Learners with limited learning experiences in formal settings. Generally characterised by low levels of formal education, low levels of literacy in first language and possible non-Roman script in first language* (NSW AMES, 1993,p. 9)

McKay (1994, p. 92) identified a group of younger learners with some similar characteristics, who were likely to take " a long time (even up to two years or longer) to progress through to Stage 1L", the beginner level of the NLLIA Bandscales. Their limited literacy and numeracy skills in a first language, due to a disrupted educational background, were seen to be compounded when they began to learn English.

Jackson (1994) in her research of these learners in the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), identified further characteristics which were shown to impact on formal language learning. One of these is that of having a cultural background and educational perspectives significantly different from those of Anglo-Australian culture. The group of learners selected in the study, have similar characteristics to those she identified, with some, usually having all of the following:

- Early literacy / pre-literacy skills
- disrupted schooling – limited formal educational background
- from non-roman script background
- older
- traumatized
- experience cultural differences.

In addition to the above, the majority (refer to Table 1 in Appendix 2) had no, or a very limited, formal educational background and were new arrivals to the country, with ages ranging from 18 to 66 years.

Concerning their spoken language proficiency, the group was very different from an English Speaking Background (ESB) group of learners, the latter who for a variety of reasons may not read, but in general have a good oral language base. The learners with the exception of two (out of 33) have had very little English language on entry to class. According to the Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ASLPR) scale (Ingram & Wylie 1985), learners were usually classified as '0' in most, if not all of the macroskills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. The two exceptions scored 1+ in speaking and listening (another four with ASLPR 1), with it being considered that the highest would have had difficulty if integrated into a class of ESB learners. As referred to above, their primary difficulty would arise from learning literacy in their first language (L1) and they are now trying to learn L2 (a second or subsequent language) literacy without this base in their L1 (and again without an oral language base in L2).

Learners' initial assessment and further design of the study

The learners were independently assessed by TAFE's English Placement Referral Service. The ASLPR scale, is the main instrument used by TAFE Queensland for course placement purposes. Although the validity and reliability of the ASLPR scale has been called into question (Brindley, 1989; Alderson, 1991; McNaught and McGrath, 1997) it was used by independent assessors as a guide to initial course placement into competency-based programs. These proficiency assessments were verified by the teacher in the first week of

class commencement, through observation of classroom tasks and interactions. They were not used for any further or ongoing assessment in the study.

The student participants were all from the class known as "Literacy", which ran from January 1996 to December 1997. Most learners stayed two terms (each term being from 100 to 120 hours), with the longest staying 4 terms (I year) and the exceptions staying 20-40 hrs part-time over several weeks. Each class contained from 6 -12 learners with an average of eight. The class was originally set up as a feeder program. (The role for class was to get learners ready for entry into beginner general ESL classes). Although the need was seen for them to have the option of staying in this kind of alternative program on an ongoing basis (that is for the duration of their 510 AMEP- funded hours) other funding issues prevailed.

Out of an original number of 33 students, eight were selected to exhibit the full range of proficiencies from among those with the most limited education backgrounds in the group. Women predominated because the learners were initially selected by the main criterion of a Limited Education Background (LEB) as described by Ramm (1992). As women had the lowest number of years of schooling from the waitlist of students (in relation to the initial ASLPR level), they predominated in the groupings.

Men came into the study group, especially in later stages, through referral from other class teachers upon agreement with the students themselves. Although not part of the design, the teacher-researchers also took different classes over a 20 month period, as part of their duties. Combined, these involved all levels of the CSWE, which included proportionate numbers of men. This was significant for foregrounding issues concerning all learners: men and women. We believe this has helped to ameliorate gender bias.

Although there are different existing traditions of action research, it is a people-oriented research by nature: it is both evaluative and reflective and aims to bring about change and improvement in practice. It is contextual, small-scale and localized because it can identify and investigate practical issues within a specific situation. It provides also an opportunity to reflect and improve, thus involving teaching as a dynamic process (Burns, 1997).

According to Burns (1998) action research suggests a "bottom up" rather than a "top-down" view of teacher development. Improvements in educational practice can be grounded in insights generated by teachers, giving teachers greater influence "over what is to count as valid educational knowledge" (p. 356). It is a knowledge-generating model, which aims to shift the locus of control from external agencies to learning centres themselves – the teacher-researcher model. Professional development of teachers through action research, can heighten awareness of policy implications, and generate ideas which link problems of teaching and learning with broader questions of institutional and social policy. The fostering of both teacher development and of developing training and educational centres more generally, can be interdependent and part of the same process (Burns, 1998).

The research was undertaken informally over a period of 20 months by the authors. Ongoing feedback on student progress was received by the teacher-researchers from other team members involved with the learners: student counsellor, three bilingual tutors, four other regular volunteer tutors, and five receiving teachers (of the beginning general ESL classes). Participant-researchers had informal interviews with family members and learners' friends, which involved bilingual support, and this also included visiting some learners' home environments, on occasion, where appropriate. It is believed that all of the above has helped to develop a well-rounded view of learners' needs and the impact of the English course on their lives. Learners' permission was sought to include samples of their work and they were made aware of the confidentially of the data. It was considered that trust and good rapport had been established with the participants over time.

The findings provided the grounding for a new curriculum module (MLM) and

guidelines appended to it, which were written over an additional period of four months. Further updates on progress were gained from teacher feedback and printouts from further post-AMEP courses or activity over the following year (refer Appendix 3, Table 1) before the report was written.

Therefore, in the light of both contemporary critical and postmodern discourses, such as those from the critical thinking and critical literacy movements, action research has the potential to be an empowering form of classroom based research – that is, through "self-reflective enquiry...involving collaboration and cooperation" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 162) it can effect positive change and improve the quality of program delivery.

To summarize, the objectives of the research were:

- to improve **retention rates** by fulfilling conditions of interest. This was done against a background of low retention rates (which had been the previous experience of other small "Literacy" classes)
- to **improve language and literacy learning**
- to **assess performance** more effectively.

The result was the curriculum. (This became an objective in wake of the initial exploratory investigation)

A more specific detailing of the methodology follows.

Action Learning Cycles

***REFLECTION* Phase 1:** **January 1996**

Issue

Special needs ESOL descriptors are pitched too high. What are the needs of these learners? What approaches would be most effective?

Methodology

- Participant-observation of group and setting: class teacher-researcher of learner group, other participant-researcher of teacher and learners (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992)
- Learner work samples kept to show entry levels
- Daily teaching reflective journal, which was discussed twice a week with participant-researcher. This then became a weekly reflection record to identify issues central to teaching these learners (Bailey, 1990; 1997 – in conversation).
- Informal interviews with learners and interested family members at the centre, with bilingual support. Contact with case managers/CES and social worker.
- Literature review of competency based training and issues – especially through enrolling in further studies in an attempt to increase understanding of the learners and setting.

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REFLECTION Phase 2: **April 1996**

Issue

The validity of the written language construct (of CSWE I) seems questionable. CSWE 1 seems to assume literacy in L1.

Questions

Is there a need for renewing /changing the CSWE curriculum framework to develop an alternative curriculum module for use with Adult ESOL/Early Literacy Learners and what is the nature of that need? Is it possible to map learner progress against the CSWE elements of competency?

Methodology

- deconstruction of the elements of the competency and thereby the retention of the integrity of the tasks in the CSWE, without teaching decontextualised skills; task analyses performed.
- As above – collection of learner samples, participant-observation, noting progress, and reflective journals
- recognition of ethnographic features – social view of language – field trips
- adoption of a philosophy of critical literacy
- informal interviews with: learners, families/interpreting, volunteer tutors, counsellor, social worker, centre director.

REFLECTION Phase 3: **July 1996**

Issues:

The assessment instructions and the format of the simplest reading task in the CSWE I "Can read social sight signs" are more complex than the reading meant to be assessed. Similarly, the student may be perceived not to have learnt language because the written worksheets used in the general English class can not elicit this oral/spoken language. The writing script styles are open to the personal preference of the teacher, therefore there is no standard used for Band A learners, making the nature of reading activities problematic.

Questions:

Can we collect more data to validate initial findings/patterns.?
Can we collaboratively share information?

Methodology

- as above, including receiving teacher of general English class
- elicitation of information from students problematic due to limited proficiency.

Inclusive of all communicative responses – verbal, gesture, body language to allow for a richer portrayal.

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REFLECTION Phase 4: **January 1997**

Questions:

Would it be beneficial to engage in informal communication to other beginning level teachers on the team, and alter perceptions of learners' profiles? (ie. that they can learn more than was previously thought)?
Would it possible to collaboratively share approaches and philosophies?

Methodology:

- as above
- audio and video recordings of some class sessions.
- addition of new colleague, Jenny Trevino, who engaged in participant-observation and workshops
- professional development presentations of two statewide workshops of practical teaching approaches – to raise awareness of issues, learner needs and abilities and teachers' expectations of success.

The methodology included the reflection on practice by the teachers, as suggested in 'a critical friendship' (Farrell, 1998).

REFLECTION Phase 5: **August – December 1997**

Issue

Although multiple approaches to literacy had achieved results and were responsive to learners' diversity, we were faced with the dilemma of how to present our findings in a field in which it may be considered more "consistent" to adhere to one approach. As we found these multiple approaches worked with learners, we were not compelled to emphasize any one approach.

Action Required: On reflection from feedback to workshop we realized there was a need for a formalized document, so that at other centres if there were not enough of learners to be grouped as a Band A / LEB class, the teacher would have an overview on which to base teaching practice (e.g. tutor working with student in multi-level classroom). Permission sought via TAFE Qld Language and Access consortium to develop modules related to CSWE.

Action Completed: Initial framework to module, involving performance indicators for Band A Literacy & Numeracy written by early August. However, we were requested only to produce the Multiple Literacies Module for the consortium, which was completed in December 1997. This was to represent what the participant Band A group could learn to do independently, or do with support, and to capture the underlying competencies involved for these kinds of learners.

Methodology:

- Curriculum module written as a product of phase 4 and ongoing analysis of reflections from diaries/data/samples.
- Performance indicators/elements of competency broken down from the initial elements of competencies for CSWE 1 (as initially done in phase 2) and new ones were grounded from broad improvements learners had made over time – that is, descriptors were written which started from where the learners started and generally mapped achievable goals, within the existing CSWE domains. However these were expanded to include broader activities/tasks (task analyses performed) which were

generated from stated learner needs and responses : eg computing, further learning strategies, shared experience, and the language of feelings and emotions – to involve students in participation in ongoing feedback to the teacher regarding choices/direction of program.

- Reflection of feedback from senior consultant PD/ practicing teachers received.
- Reflection from expressed needs for learning/literacy/numeracy for Band A students – by one of the researchers during attendance at National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research (NCELTR) short course – Classroom based research for language and literacy teachers;
- Ongoing literature review and attendance by teacher-researchers at Conference by Queensland Association of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages conference (QATESOL).

REFLECTION Phase 6: **February 1998**

Questions:

Can we validate and support our claims by a retrospective write-up of the research cycle – the processes of curriculum renewal/learner profiles/cases?
Can we informally implement curriculum and pilot in other classes?

Actions:

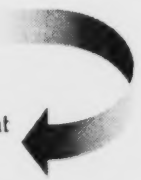
Applied for funding QALRN early Feb 1998 to continue the project.
MLM Curriculum Modules bought by TAFE's Access and Language Consortium (see Appendix)

Methodology

- retrospective write-up of process & findings & guidelines
- feedback from experts on reference group – drawn from TAFE and University
- ongoing literature review & analysis

Summary of Change from the Action Cycles

Change from Action Research ➧ Change in
Participants – Learners &
– Teachers
Programme – Curriculum Document



➧ Small System improvement from the bottom-up?

Situating the MLM and Consequences of the Research

The consequences of the research were the creation of the MLM tables and the guidelines. The MLM uses the same terminology as the CSWE documents, so that it can be accessible for teachers who are already used to this format, and who may be teaching classes in which beginning literacy / Band A students are enrolled.

Moreover, the CSWE uses the same kinds of terminology as that of the National Training Board, having been formulated to its requirements. The curriculum contains a field of work or study which is grouped into units of competency, which are further elaborated in elements of competency. The elements of competency for each unit refer to the essential linguistic features of the text, knowledge relevant to the content of the text and the application of these within a context. Performance indicators or "Performance Criteria" are then listed to reveal the minimum performance required for the element concerned. The performance criteria are statements about the learner's performance in constructing or understanding the text and where possible give examples of linguistic features required. Range of variables or "Range Statements" are also to be used to assist assessment and to define the parameters of the assessment context or task. They set limits for the performance of the competency in terms of, for example, time constraints, length of text, extent of assistance allowed and characteristics of the listener in oral interaction. The units of competency are general statements of intended outcomes of learning and cover four domains – knowledge and learning competencies, oral language competencies, reading competencies and writing competencies. The language competencies involve both spoken and written genres, for example, "can read simple written instructions; can recount a short familiar event; can write short descriptions on personal/familiar topics". Sample texts which relate to the competency and suggested tasks for assessment are also given. The competencies describe and are exclusively expressed as what a learner "can do" at the end of a course of study.

The major linguistic influence or Discourse (Gee, 1990) informing the Certificates is the 'genre approach', a text-oriented, socially situated view of language and learning (Bottomely, et al 1994). The focus of the genre approach on discourse structure, its strong claims about the relationship of language elements on context, and its commitment to direct and overt teaching of these elements, make it amenable to a competency-based training (CBT) approach to layout and presentation. The competency descriptions relate language to the cultural and social contexts of its use, are based on whole spoken and written texts and describe language development in terms of learners progressively accessing increasingly demanding contexts of language use (Hagan, 1994).

The CSWE was written to be consistent with the first 4 levels of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), with 1 being the lowest, Certificate III at trade level, and graduation from Certificate IV at university entrance level. This means that Certificate 1 learners are placed at the same level as AQF level 1 and the general Certificates of Education in the Secondary Sector. CSWE Certificate 1 is equated with level 3 of the National Reporting System – NRS (Coates, et al, 1994) , which means that the NRS indicators are considered to be placed two levels under the AQF level 1 and the CSWE 1. The Certificate in Vocational Access (CNLO3) developed by TAFE Qld appears to have three levels under the AQF level 1 (Level 1A, Level 1B and Level 2) with level 3A pitched at level 1 of the AQF. (CNLO3 is currently being modified and renamed).

This research should indicate that these special needs learners' *starting point*, before being placed into any program, is at an entry level which also underpins the NRS level 1. However the NRS was not intended as "a means for categorising students by a simple 'level', nor ...(as) competency statements as such but (to be) the underpinnings of competence" (Coates et al, 1994, p. 2). The NRS was not intended as a curriculum, although

was "informed by analysis of over 30 ALBE and ESL curriculum documents and the National Framework of Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy competence". They are "generalised statements sequenced according to principles of language, literacy, learning and numeracy complexity" and as such "should not be interpreted as directly-assessable classroom tasks" (p.2).

Regarding the NRS, there were perceived to be controlling influences on what teachers felt they could or could not do, in relation to learners' needs, and "teaching the competencies" in a sense became a controlling Discourse. Although the NRS may have been able to capture progress of the study group, the climate of "reporting competencies to Canberra" did not seem conducive to this; especially when we were also working in with other teachers who were using a new curriculum (the CSWE). The focus was on reporting progress useful to the new standardized statistical record-keeping introduced at the center.

Thus the research was focused on questioning the appropriacy of developing a new module which would be seen to be immediately consistent with the underpinnings of the CSWE curriculum framework. However, the authors also suggest that it could form a component of other beginner courses involving ESOL special needs learners, particularly because its focus is on developing beginning spoken English (prior to its transfer to written language, which may not be commensurate) and which can be related to a variety of contexts of use (see Recommendations/Meta-Reflection).

Discussion of Findings

Developing Oracy

Spoken and written language form a complementary continuum (Halliday, 1985) and the most significant point about the teaching approach used with these learners was to start with oral language, not written. We have also found that the use of a *dynamic interface* between oral language and written language is more effective than a linear sequence. The teacher would continually model the links between oral language, oral language written down, and simple written language texts. This better reflects the everyday interface between the two, that is, the rotating around spoken and written modes. Again, this is inclusive of non verbal language or kinesics and other visual cues. There were seen to be other factors to communication than spoken and written modes. Initially, the students were introduced to literacy skills through minimal input by print (McPherson, 1997, p.58). Through language in context, interactions with more sophisticated language learners involved not just repeating the language, but jointly constructing the text. The dynamic interface is best exemplified by the following video-taped transcript, which was representative of the participants' language acquisition after approximately 400 hours of literacy classes (over a period of one year). It occurred towards the end of a session, whereby the teacher joined a class subgroup of 3 learners (D.15, T. 23 and A.16) who had been working with a volunteer tutor on activities structured around looking at photos of social sight signs in the context of shopping.

The class had visited a shopping centre a few weeks before, where D.15 had pointed out some plastic seafood in the fish shop window and had asked for their names. The teacher brought these into the classroom to reinforce and generate language.

Context: *20 June 1997.* Teacher, 3 students and volunteer are sitting around a table in the classroom *among other groups doing other activities, assisted by volunteer-tutors, as guided by the teacher.* Teacher M is next to A.16, A.16 next to T.23, T.23 next to volunteer, volunteer next to D.15, with a short space between D.15 and Teacher M. Photo books are open at Delicatessen page – had previously talked about delicatessen, "delicacy" had been

mentioned but not didactically explained. A routine was established that in this kind of task they could talk across to each other (related to MLM spoken language competency 5). This therefore gives the effect of fast communicative exchanges, involving an overlaying of voices, which perhaps best parallels a normal group conversation:

(... means short pause). D.15's face was not always within range of camera, therefore all of her facial expressions were not captured. Teacher – Researcher at normal speaking pace.

Teacher M:	(holding up a plastic crab) ...It's a delicacy.
	Something very special
A.16:	good? Shakes head (expression to indicate not good)
Teacher M:	very special...crab...yes
T.23:	nice (with smile to Teacher M and head movement)
	Nice...yummy (smiling, turning to volunteer + raising eyebrows & eye widening – looks around to others)
A.16:	turns to T.23 with expression to indicate she doesn't like the crab
D.15:	signifies she likes it to T.23 (inaudible)
A.16	(to D.15) Yeah?
	Do you like this one?
D.15:	yes (arm gesture – to approximate shrug)
Teacher M:	it's special
	And it's very expensive
T.23:	very expensive
	Very very expensive
A.16:	(sitting back and shaking head, speaking softly) I don't like that one
Teacher M:	and you put it into a pot
	Into a pot (holding crab up – action of putting into same)
Volunteer:	and it goes Ooh (soft noise of crab cooking)
T.23:	quickly turns to volunteer, smiles, raises eyebrows and widens eyes
Teacher M:	and you boil it
	Like you boil tea and coffee
D.15:	nodding
A.16	(to Teacher M) Please... can .. I
Teacher M:	can I have?
T.23:	can I (to herself)
A.16:	can I have... fish?
D.15:	(at same time as A.16 speaking, tapping lobster and looking at A.16 and laughing) inaudible
A.16:	no (to D.15)
Teacher M:	OK, fish and chips or just fish?
T.23s:	laughs to volunteer/group
A.16:	fish with potato
Teacher M:	Potato chips and fish (holding plastic potato chips)
T.23s:	(to herself) chips
	What kind of fish?
A.16:	Half a kilo
Teacher M:	half a kilo of...whiting...or bream... or flake? (holding fish up and smiling)
T.23:	wh...bream...f... (softly to herself)

D.15: this one (reached and tapped one of the fish on the table)
Bream
Teacher M: OK, half a kilo of bream
Ok I'll weigh it
That's um $5 thanks
Puts out hand for money (intentional joke – smiles)
A.16: Mimes giving money
...
Teacher M: quickly mimes taking money and giving change
this is what you buy...at the shop (holding one of the fishfood pieces)
T.23s: maybe you buy this (to volunteer) and laughs
Laugh laugh
Volunteer: um I'll take kiss kiss, kiss kiss (reference to kisses on bottom of a postcard which was read earlier)
T.23s: laughs
D.15: How much ' s a kilo? (reaches across and taps lobster on table at same time as T.23 laughs with volunteer)

In the above spoken text the field is scaffolded by both by the language provided by teacher and volunteer in turn-taking relationships, and the objects within the communicative exchange itself (MacDonald and Gillette 1986). If D.15 could not reach across to tap the lobster, it is questionable, that she would have taken a turn in the conversation at that stage. We adapted these and the approaches of Vygostky who placed emphasis on interaction and the transfer of knowledge (Bryan 1996). Vygotsky referred to scaffolding within a zone of proximal development (ZPD) involving shared experience (Gray & Cazden 1991). Good learning is that which precedes ahead of actual current development and occurs within the ZPD, or that which involves what the learner would be able to do through jointly constructed social interaction – leading eventually to independent construction.

We found that many of the learners, particularly with minimal education, had highly developed aural skills and again learnt best through the spoken language mode. This was particular, although not exclusive, to the younger learners in the study. This was their preferred personalised learning style. Our experience is supported by McPherson's (1997) findings. In our study, the learner with the highest level of education was initially fearful of this approach. For her, the written worksheet was able to provide an aid to memory.

The issue of receptive language as superior to expressive language ability was particularly relevant for some learners who went through a more prolonged "silent period, after which they (spent) a period of time speaking in short telegraphic turns" (McKay 1994, p.92). This silent period involved language only, and was usually not indicative of overall ability. For example, the following exchange observed by the teacher-researcher and student R.4, after 2 terms (200 hours) in May 1996.

R.4: Sam (husband) doctor
Teacher M: Sam *went* to the *doctor* *(italics for sentence stress)*
R.4: Sam doctor (signed/mimed needle)
Teacher M: Sam had a *needle* at the *doctor*
R.4: Sam doctor sick

The fact that R.4 knew that her gesture would be acceptable as a communicative bridge, enabled her to continue to turn-take and extend her language. Although it would be some time before R.4 could use expressively the past tense form of the verb, participating in communicative exchanges such as this, allowed the elements of a spoken recount to emerge.

The number of turns taken by the teacher and participants in both the above and previous conversations, were fairly reciprocal, even if these were also non-verbal. We found it essential to model the language for the learners particularly during this "silent period" and say it for them before they could say it themselves. Motherese as a form of extending single-word utterances (Bruner, 1983) was used. This involved positive modelling of error correction while reinforcing these through oral interaction

eg.	student A :	yesterday go city
	teacher response:	you *went* to the city yesterday, did you?
	student response:	went city yesterday.

The above was the usual pattern used with students, in this case, to establish past tense with time markers. Those who entered the study early in their AMEP entitlement hours would self-correct when supported with these (non-patronising) prompts. We scaffolded the learners' language – and spoken responses were lengthened and became increasingly comprehensible for a person who had shared the experience (Vygotsky 1986; Halliday, 1975; Painter 1985). Modelling and scaffolding were features of everyday classroom interaction. In this sense the class program resembled an early intervention program to avoid the 'fossilization' of errors.

The rate of oral language acquisition was also assisted by using explicit iconic referents (that looked like what they were meant to represent) rather than symbolic or abstract representations, for instance, a hands-on beach ball globe rather than a 2D map. We have experienced that accurate mime and gesture provide iconic/pictorial support, to assist receptive language and open up new channels of communication for some. It assisted not only in comprehension but in active listening (Antes, 1996; Mrowa-hopkin 1993). For reluctant speakers and readers, it is a bit like providing a bilingual picture dictionary. In addition, activities based around authentic and/or hands-on materials can generate a lot of spoken language which then forms a good basis for transference to written language. Similarly, real community contexts provide a basis for language acquisition.

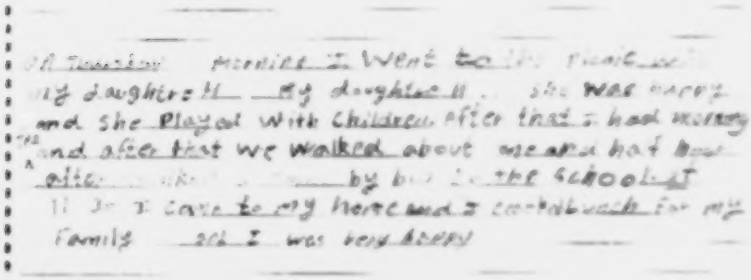
Using Hands on Materials

We found it produced results to use hands on materials and authentic objects and/or material itself wherever possible (that is, not a copy). For example, junk mail does not have to have something 'done to it', such as cutting and pasting for photocopying, to be legitimized as learning material. Well-intentioned simplification may confuse learners because it can strip the material of context cues. We believe it is a misconception that 'low-level' learners have difficulty with authentic material. Our experience has been the opposite: the lower the level, the greater the need for 'realia' (the real thing) to provide contextual support for language learning. Real objects can be very useful, as they are immediately identifiable.

Hood and Kightley (1990) identified concern with ambiguous drawings which assumed learners had a similar understanding of pictures and symbols to those who have experienced a western education system. They also suggested a teaching approach which was not so reliant on written worksheets to support the development of oral language. "Understanding the worksheet" on which spoken language development is hung is almost a genre in itself .

From more spoken to more written language

Richards and Nowicki (1998) suggest that rather than a "rigid developmental sequence among genres ...progress appears to be along the mode continuum from 'more spoken' to 'more written" They claim that genre based teaching (GBT) for ESOL adults has the limitation that it has stemmed largely from research into children's L1 written language and has been "transposed to spoken language". Hence as "planning units" for schools, they may not be legitimate for L2 adults . L1 children have a more advanced lexixo-grammar than L2 learners, so their burden in constructing discourse is significantly less (p.50). Because the activities and tasks described in the MLM focus more on the building of spoken language, without recourse to completing worksheets or being able to read, there is a primary focus on acquisition, prior to its transfer to written language.



Learner T.23, written 19 June 1997, after 2 1/2 terms of literacy (after 250 – 300 hours of literacy, over a 6-8 month period, which followed two terms of general English classes). Names have been erased.

In the above example (completed previous day to group conversation) Learner T.23 has recorded a spoken recount. Although she wrote it independently, she spoke about it to her brother prior to writing (with at the most, minimal prompting). She was highly motivated to record her actions and family's feelings as reflected in the overall mood of the recount. As this was the first time she had done this of her own initiative, she brought it eagerly to class and independently read it many times to others. Note the uses of the passive verb "was" which is generally considered by teachers to be more difficult to learn (the CSWE 1 requires action verbs only). She also has clearly defined staging, time markers and conjunctions. Her use of personal pronouns is good for her 'level', although there is some over-use. Although she has not constructed a simple noun group "incorporating an article, an adjective and a noun" (according to the requirements) she has included other items, such as her own and her daughter's feelings, which lend an authenticity to her writing. She could not write in her L1 (see Appendix 1, Table 1).

Hammond (1990) describes developing control of genre through a process involving: modelling, joint negotiation of text, and later independent construction. The MLM anticipates "doing genre" through a process of explicit feedback, involving negotiation between teacher and learner, explicit teaching, redrafting and editing (eg. on a whiteboard/OHT.) We rarely came in with a "top-down" written model which is so often used in ESL classes. Rather we would elicit student input for selected activities, to explicitly explore language features. We advocate that this process can be applicable at all levels, including the word and/or clause level for these learners.

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The enabling required from teacher to learner, or "support person" to learner, emerged as a constant in the study. For example, although K.11 had not been to school in Kampuchea (Cambodia) she could write a little in another language. Her recounts (above and below) exploited her spoken English well. This was the first and only time she had used her own language as support to her English learning in the written mode (although this was often encouraged) and it seemed to be a watershed for experiential writing. K.11 learnt to sound out words and write in English. This had been explicitly developed with learners, through the kind of learning-to-learn activities described in MLM competency 3: "can use meta-language and meta-learning to assist in the learning process" . However, Learner K needed to feel she had someone "to talk to face-to-face about it " before writing, with Teacher-Researcher D writing in English underneath (above left).

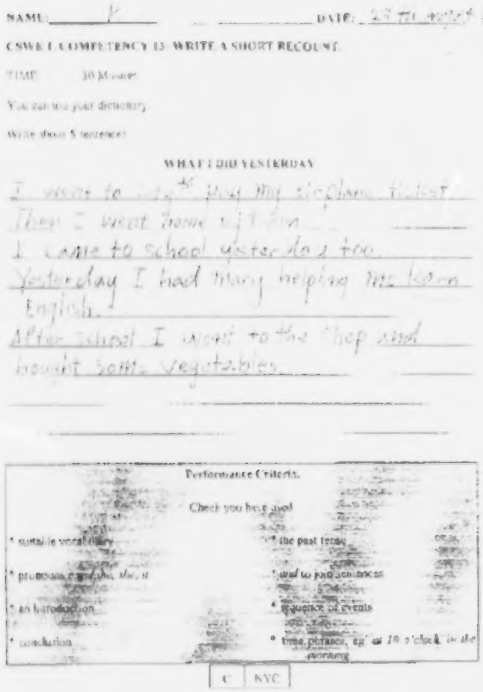
What makes this different from a 'progressive' approach (Richardson, 1991; Cope and Kalantzis, 1993) is the ongoing scaffolding and explicit attention to language features, which were further reinforced from her workbook material. More in tune with participatory approaches (Auerbach, 1992) and other theories of adult learning (Knowles, 1990) the content often comes from the learners' themselves, although not exclusively, as indicated in all of the discussion of findings. Experiential writing was only one approach which was seen to be very helpful. This was incorporated into the MLM as spoken language competency 10, to build the field for this written language competency in Certificate I, CSWE.

To validate these findings K.11 was asked to complete the assessment task independently with Teacher-M (see

overpage). She found this a stressful experience. There is not the same staging in this recount, perhaps because she had not discussed it beforehand. The need for this kind of "with support" enabling, is also reflected in other documents, such as NLLIA Bandscales (McKay 1994) and the NRS (Coates et al, 1994). Although her increasingly advanced fluency with the lexico-grammar is reflected in her writing, it again does not have all of the formulaic requirements. As K.11 had difficulty with reading the linguistic terminology, she did not remember to include all of this, although she had 30 minutes in which to complete the task and did it in half the time. The criteria listed were:

- suitable vocabulary;
- pronouns eg. I, he she it;
- an introduction; *conclusion;
- the past tense;
- *and* to join sentences;
- sequence of events; and
- time phrases, eg. *at 10 o'clock, in the morning*.

It is implicit that the student can read the performance criteria.


NAME: K DATE:

CSWE I COMPETENCY 13: WRITE A SHORT RECOUNT.

TIME: 30 Minutes

You can use your dictionary.

Write about 5 sentences.

WHAT I DID YESTERDAY

I went to [illegible] first My [illegible]
Then I went home after
I came to school yesterday too
Yesterday I had many helping me learn
English
After school I went to the shop and
bought some vegetables

Performance Criteria.

Check you have used

* suitable vocabulary
* pronouns eg. I, he, it
* an introduction
* conclusion
* the past tense
* and to join sentences
* sequence of events
* time phrases, eg. at 10 o'clock, in the morning

C | NYC

Although learner K.11 possessed well developed Basic Interpersonal communication skills (BICS), the objective assessment task required that she had also developed a degree of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency or CALP (Cummins 1983; Collier, 1987, 1989) which takes a prolonged time to develop.

This was not processed by the teacher-researcher as a pass with our centre records and remained for continued development in the general english class. However recount was not "being done" that term. Although K.11 didn't want to leave the Literacy class she passed most of the other competencies in the general class the following term (see Appendix 3, Table 1). This made her quite an exceptional learner for this category at the time. As the conditions of interest did not seem to be the same in the larger class group, she stopped attending after this and moved to Sydney where no further activity has been recorded.

During term 3 we realized that future time seemed to be more readily realised by the learners, than recount (see MLM Spoken language competency 9). The verb does not change in the future tense, so the transfer from present to future (simple) by the auxiliary, is easier than verb changes in the past (eg. I cook every day; I will cook tonight; I'm going to cook tonight). Subtle nuances, which we observed teachers focus on, were less significant in real conversation with L1 speakers. We used mime to indicate the spontaneous and definite use of 'will', and modelled structures, often incidentally, through oral interaction. Focussing on the future (and only immediate past time) enabled learners

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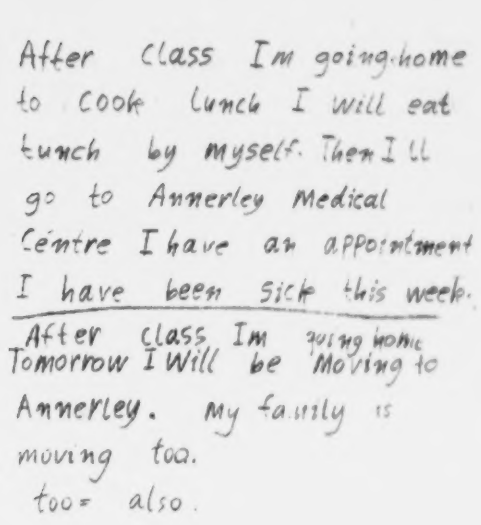
After class Im going home to cook lunch I will eat lunch by myself. Then I ll go to Annerley Medical Centre I have an appointment I have been sick this week.

After class Im going home Tomorrow I Will be Moving to Annerley. My family is moving too.
too= also.

to plan without reliving past traumatic experiences (Stone, 1995). Feedback to the centre from a psychiatric clinic dealing with torture and trauma, prior to the study, clearly indicated that recounting biographical details through a detailed timeline was engendering stress and re-traumatising students.

Learner D.15 (left) May 1997.

Relating Competencies to Authentic Contexts

It was discovered that many learners achieved more Certificate I competencies through the approaches implemented, *which developed underlying competencies* (incorporated in the MLM), than those identified by McPherson (1997) in her investigation of the AMEP.

Rather than "teaching the competencies" as ends in themselves, it was more productive to interpret competence and competency broadly, beyond the narrow strictures of competence as performance, to include: knowledge, skills, thinking, processes, attitudes, motivations and physical attributes – an attribute contributing to the successful performance of a task, job, function or activity (Docking, 1994). Bachman (1990) describes various forms of language competence as features or components of an individual's communicative ability in language use. Language competence consists of *organisational competence*, involving grammatical and textual competence and pragmatic competence, involving sociolinguistic and illocutionary competence (eg. A.16's *Good? You like this one?* – as implicit meanings underlying the words in the 'group conversation'). An individual's language competence is transferred through his or her *strategic competence* and *physical and mental body* in the context of a situation. The term "competence" was renamed "knowledge", and other areas were reclassified in Bachman and Palmer (1993), such as, "metacognitive strategies" and "affective schemata". Therefore, in theory, competency is not the same thing as performance. However, the tendency has become that of focussing on the performances themselves and not giving enough consideration in assessing and reporting on the actual underlying competencies (Docking 1994).

The listening and speaking competencies in the modules developed by participants, build the oral language required for written competencies in the MLM and spoken and written competencies in further Certificate I CSWE. Instead of just selecting one or two MLM competencies to work on exclusively, such as, form-filling and personal information, we worked on proficiencies through building the field of a *number of elements of* each *competency.*

(K.11 early April 1996. Information was correct)

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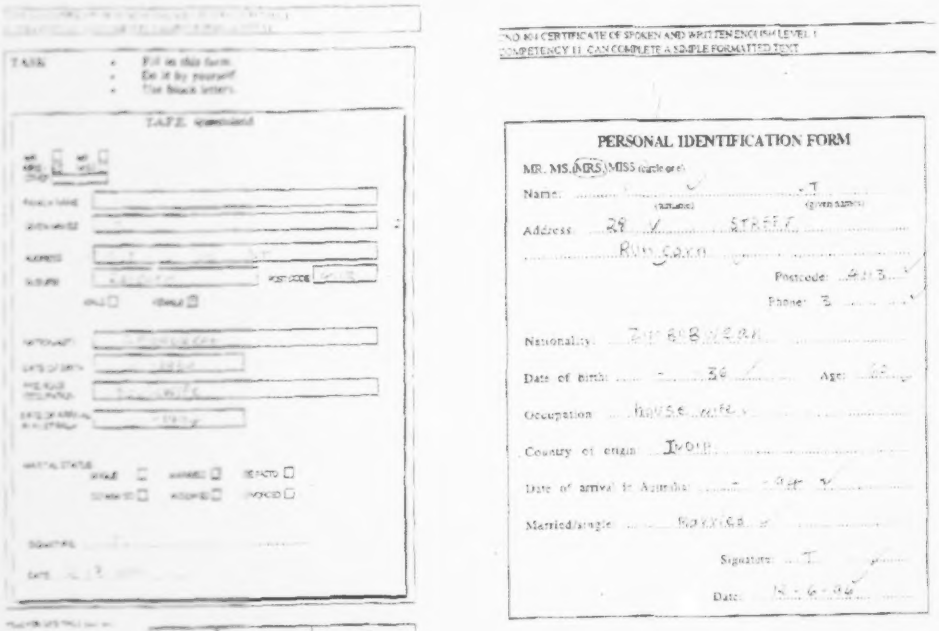
Although writing for this particular learner would have initially been thought to involve not much more than the need to clearly print their name and address correctly, or fill in basic forms, through this study we have become aware of how restrictive this one goal can be for learners. This is especially pertinent to learners who are needing to develop an expansive vocabulary to communicate within broader social contexts. Certainly these tasks are essential settlement skills. But form-filling can also "turn-off" the learner, if it is approached as a kind of lock-step task (that is, the learner should be able to do it before progressing to other activities). Several of the learners (such as T.23,C.5, R.13, S.17, T.14) had also been sent from 300+ hours of general ESL classes, in which the language of "personal information" as form-filling had been extensively done. However they were still not able to recognize letters of the alphabet in context, form letters, etc. Nevertheless they made progress in the smaller literacy classes and learnt to do these things. This then brought them up to the observed level of those who had only been in the literacy class environment.

The expectation prior to the study was that it would take two terms for this kind of a learner to write her address. In foregrounding the study, it was observed that if "address" (as an element of form-filling) was focussed on too often, especially without success, then it could unwittingly have the feeling of an assessment task, causing nervousness and failure. Although involving essential settlement information for learners, the task of both saying and writing an address in English, involves a complexity of information – formation of numbers (often 2 and 3 digits) and letters, pronunciation of names/suburb...concept of state... and memory or information concerns, particularly for a traumatized refugee. If focussed on too soon we can tend to blame the learner.



PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION FORM

ABOVE: The same student (T.10) completed these forms within a period of 3 months – first one read to researcher D to clarify terms before completing – the second was done independently as an assessment task within the general English class. Note her change of street address has not caused her a problem and she has seemed to use syllabification of suburb as a mnemonic -as explicitly practiced in first class. She had well developed spoken language (see Appendix 1, Table 1)

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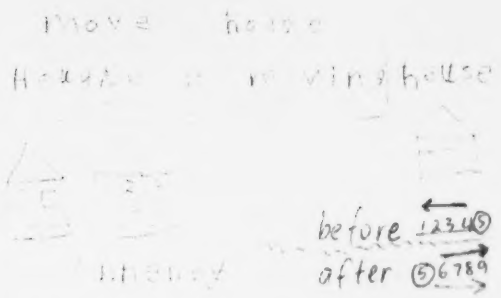
A program in which this task is centred in real-life, would involve locating their address on a health care card or letter, and providing strategies for transferring this information from a personalised ID card, also with bilingual/picture cues (see reading competency 7; writing competency 3). Again, for the participants in the study, a variety of tasks (and recycling content in a different form) enabled learners to have greater chances of success and demonstrated increases in self-esteem, than previously reported or expected. Learners can transfer this skill (eg. copying another student's address to send a get-well card to an absent student, or quickly learning their address if they move house) rather than following a lock-step program which hinders their progress.



(Learner S.6, end of term one, 1996)

Being open ...

We avoided deficit thinking by highlighting and valuing difference in learners (Black and Thorp, 1997). A multiple literacies definition implies that the teacher will regard the learners as people with life skills and experience, not people deficient in skills, and build on these strengths. In Adult ESOL/Literacy classes, learners and teachers alike bring years of life experience and cultural knowledge to the instructional setting (McGroaty, 1993). Informed by a Freirian and socio-cultural perspective, learners are not regarded as empty vessels.

There was ongoing evaluation of the teacher and learners' program and progress. Learners were given the language to actively request and disagree, in the context of building strategic and pragmatic competence with language in use. For example "What is this? Can I ? Don't like etc, and this was shown to be completely acceptable behaviour from the teachers' response. Built into each MLM competency this participatory component was first developed through contextual support for key words/phrases, such as complementary mime and pictures of language for feelings and opinions. For instance, "good/not good, like/don't like; happy/ not happy; boring/interesting. Once more proficient, then more polite forms were introduced through the spoken field, which build a more strategic competence and confidence in social interactions, such as: "excuse me, could I/could we...could you show me?" If one acknowledges that receptive language is greater than expressive language:

> *"it's not that they can't understand because they can't articulate. If there are sufficient referents and contextual cues then this can support and extend dialogue"*
> (teacher D, late April, 1996, journal entry).

Although seemingly challenging, we considered it worthwhile to work like this, because you are getting so much more feedback and are generating language acquisition and learning. The alternative, as experienced prior to the study, was a more *repressed, unconfident*

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communicator. For example, in relation to learner R.13, who had previously had difficulties in behaviour, and had not seen the centre counsellor for a couple of months:

> *..(she's) cleaned herself up a lot...before she was cowering in the corner of the classroom, now she's more confident ...she stated her points assertively to the interpreter...I noticed a big improvement in her speaking since the last time I saw her...2 months ago...*
>
> (Student counsellor, late May 1996, journal entry)

Similarly, this meant being open to other ways of doing language learning. The participatory component was a thread woven into all classes. Those with oral language could express their needs in an ongoing basis. For example, learner K.11 requested to learn how to use an ATM machine, because she didn't want to rely on her daughter to withdraw money for her. All of the others except R.13 agreed to do the exercise, to which K.11 later commented:

> *"not pretend I can do it – it not help me"* (journal entry, K.11, late May 1996)

to which R.13 later stated:

> *"I know this (pointing to real money) but not this (pointing to written amounts)" during an activity involving recording money.*

Those less verbal needed the inclusion of further gestures and 'compensatory' language, for example, the following comment to Teacher-M when a volunteer extended an activity by attempting to teach learners latitude and longitude on a (beach ball) globe. When the teacher joined in momentarily, to support and intervene, the student turned to the teacher and said:

> *"Marian. No...Today shopping. Can (I) have? How much? This (pointing to globe) Australia 2 years '* (journal entry, Learner W.27, September 1997)

This was to communicate that after she had been in Australia for two years and had learnt language which was more immediate to her needs, she would then be interested.

The philosophy of the program was to be inclusive of volunteers who could assist with individual learning, discourage dependency and "learned helplessness" (such as previously displayed by Learner G.12) on the one teacher, and provide interactive models for language acquisition. However, we would suggest that the class teacher have some input into the training of volunteer tutors for a number of reasons. Firstly, the task of explaining the focus of the program and teaching approaches specific to early literacy/ESOL can become unmanageable on a daily basis. During the study there were at least 12 volunteers involved. Only a few were at cross purposes with the aims of the teacher but this could have been avoided with more initial training. A teacher in being so open runs the risk of having their program seen as: "just common sense... I know exactly what to do" (journal entry June 1997).

Perhaps a good example of the importance of participating in interactive activities, is highlighted by learner A.16, who had broken her wrist (and writing hand) but nevertheless attended for reading and communication. We would suggest that such a program was flexible enough for them to choose to write or not, at this entry level.

...Critical Awareness & Critical Literacies

These were enacted by teacher-researchers on behalf of a marginalised group of learners, informed by the philosophies of critical literacy. These special needs learners, many of whom were women, were arguably the most vulnerable of all those in the AMEP, with the least number of resources, in relation to limited literacy in their first language.

Competency frameworks have the potential to make explicit the ways in which we judge learners. There is a danger in that they may provide an "apparently objective and value-free veneer to processes and decisions that are ultimately based in values and perceptions" (Williams, 1994).

Perhaps we need to emphasize the human side to classification when grouping people into Language/Literacy classes. For example, if we can more easily classify a learner as a CSWE 1 or an ASLPR 0 (terminology still used) but have difficulty conceptualizing them in a form which recognises their adult life experience, then perhaps we need to re-think why we are doing this. Perhaps the term "beginner" or "high support", as used in other special needs areas could be used, rather than terms such as "the zeros" or "low-level". Perhaps it is easier to de-humanise people by giving them a number that may be thought of in lesson programming terms of "that's all that they can do" or "I'm surprised she's 0+ not 0" which focuses on deficiencies. It could then become possible to disengage from the responsibility of expecting improvement on behalf of this kind of learner. It was experienced that learners at the lower end of the scale were judged less worthy of receiving a class (CES funded) than a learner at the higher end of the profile – even though they had improved – but the assessment scale could not adequately capture this at the time (June 1996).

Many of the Band-A learners were multilingual in spoken language, although they may not have ever learnt to write in a first language. A literacies perspective would involve a curriculum which viewed them as commencing learning with a wealth of life experience, although with literacies different to mainstream society. A specific example here would be an Ethiopian student's story-telling ability through mime and gesture – the obvious extension being sign language. Avoiding deficit thinking by highlighting and valuing difference in learners can inspire teachers to address issues of social justice in practical ways (Black and Thorp, 1997)

The teacher-researchers initially thought that a critical literacy approach within the classroom, could be taken only with those learners who had an intermediate proficiency of English. However during the study they realised through class interaction that this had been pessimistic. In fact, anything can be explained if the teacher/tutors have the skills to be able to unpack information without it losing its essential meaning – and these topics, as often introduced by the learners, can generate language acquisition. Thus they learnt to read the "word" at the same time as reading the "world" – after Freire (1987). In contrast, fairly restricted settlement topics at the lower certificate levels reflect only a curriculum's functional perspective (Tollefson, 1986) rather than social critique and cultural awareness, which promote participation.

For example, learners raised the discussion topic of land rights and reconciliation, normally done as a text-based exercise in Certificate III. This generated the acquisition of language features of description and comparison, also dates, ordinal numbers eg. "Whose land was it first?", countries, e.g. "in Africa too many countries – Australia one country" and some political terminology, which encouraged them to recount their own stories when or if they offered them. (MLM spoken language competency 10).

Teacher-Researcher M:

When learners first started the proficiency levels were not as immediately functional – so critical literacies were "reduced" to that of working out together which shop advertised a particular product more cheaply: Or the use of advertising on the product packaging that they buy (see reading competencies 1, 2, and 3). Learner A.16 insisted that the word for "toothpaste" was "Colgate". We were doing an activity with real packaging – eg. a carton of milk, a tube of toothpaste. I was able to show her that the brand name took up more space than the name of the item (eg. toothpaste). The reading activity involved matching upper and lower case shopping words to the real label. This then involved a simple discussion about the cost of advertising (focussing on the use of comparatives – more expensive, cheaper, bigger); that "no frills" and "savings" products are usually cheaper and have the word for the item largely displayed on the packet; that the colourful packaging will have the brand name as the largest word on the packet.)

(journal entry , Sept 1996)

Similarly, when reading packaging, learners would look at the largest number displayed. For example, learners would initially think that the crabs were $3.00 and not the correct amount of $3.97, or the potatoes were $1 instead of $1.29. This was because they were looking at the larger number only: "it (advertising) wants you to do/this... because it wants you to think it's cheaper ".

Although they may not have recognised the place value of the cents in the dollars, it is fair to say that the value of the dollars alone was the more dominant. Learners were also encouraged to bring in things from home, of interest (see reading competencies 8 and 9), and similarly to Wallace (cited by Lankshear, 1994) junk mail was critically viewed around particular topics.

Numeracy is embedded in many of the MLM tasks. Difficulty with numeracy concepts, which often reflect interrupted schooling, frequently involved the following in the study group:

- Representation of 3D objects as 2D and other symbols and grid references involved in reading maps/diagrams (Achren, 1991).
- Problems with addition and numeration, especially symbols on paper
- Money in written form – eg. real supermarket receipt
- Concept of place value – decimal point eg. Is it $6.00 or $60.00 or $0.60?
- May not be able to tell the time in own language – especially a
- Difficulty with analogue time (half, quarter past, etc) involving a knowledge of fractions.

The adults in the study could apply their life experience to pick up concepts more quickly than expected. Approaches that had previously been considered appropriate at the centre, had involved dealing only with the smallest numbers, in a lock step fashion (as used in the early primary grades). We sensed that this was an example of one of the easiest ways to talk down to adults, to avoid the content being "too hard" or cope with learners being "not ready" for it. The curriculum modules developed are not trying to substitute for 12 years of missed schooling. Rather, we try to start at the learners' initial entry point and build in short manageable steps (refer also to reading competencies 3, 5, 6 and 10; spoken language competency 5):

> *For example, after much oral work through interactive tasks/activities and oral language games, (and starting with numbers one to ten and quickly and progressively building) it's helpful to teach numbers as* patterns *(eg. six, sixteen, sixty). This seems very helpful for their confidence and as an approach to pronunciation, spelling and place value concepts. Other numeracy tasks, such as reading used-by and expiry dates on medicine labels, food packaging and key cards, have also needed to be taught. Common difficulties encountered were that the machine/ computer number 01 means 1 not 10 (for example, 1st January 1997, not 10th October) : "if* zero is before *the* whole number its nothing. *They got the concept when I showed place value through addition of ones (units) and tens, using hand signs and visual cues on the whiteboard → hundreds place then the thousands place.*
>
> (paraphrased from daily teaching journal 28/11/96)

Attendance rates were very high (90%'s) perhaps due to the provision of childcare and the part-time status of students. It was discovered that a particular learner (R.13) could not attend because of current domestic violence (although two other learners were known to have this difficulty). From feedback given from the counsellor and a social worker, reasons for non-attendance were not from lack of motivation, but the social backgrounds of learners themselves (Rockhill 1993). In these cases learning English Literacy resulted in increased

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confidence and self-esteem : "can do it myself now" (H.2). The social networks of learners in some cases were seen to be inhibiting formal learning, in such areas as follow-up work at home. However each situation was individual, although prior learning experiences impinged on their confidence to do this . For example, S.6 had a family of nine children and was restricted in her time; D.15's partner was eager to have her practise with her children at home (eg. with read-along tapes); T.23 and K. 22 as mother and daughter practised together – although the grandmother at first did the childminding for her daughter; A.16 spoke to her baby in English and was eager for her 12 year old son to read English – although she spoke to him in Arabic, and his father in Tigrinyan; and S. 17's partner spoke to her in French .

S.6 term 1, 1996

Due to the cultural embeddedness of the lives of the women, it was believed that confronting and therefore by implication challenging their lifestyle, would have run the risk of losing the very people we were attempting to help, and who were very regularly attending. For example, T.7 temporarily withdrew from class after Teacher M had elicited from the group reasons for learning English/Literacy which included obtaining work. A.8 explained her absence by stating "women in Iran no work... work (from) home". She returned the following session, after teacher M indicated she was not pushing an ideological barrow, but was trying to teach English for themselves and their families. He was afterwards very enthusiastic – the family practised english around the kitchen table – although the L1 was always promoted by the teacher as being important – "a mother-tongue".

We actively shifted the power of the teacher, through coming from a stance of equality and in treating the learners with respect for their experiences...learning from the learners themselves (Sanguinetti 1992).

When I actively thought in this way, then I got so much more back from the learners in return' (Teacher M – June 1997) *and "participation among adults is the only way to teach them" (Teacher D – June 1997) rather than a preschool skill program (sometimes) superimposed on adults.*

Attending to Graphics and Graphology...

Further to the section on 'hand on materials' in which learners easily confused the graphics of photocopied pictures and diagrams, the script used could be problematic. A clear and consistent printed script from the teacher and clearly printed fonts/typeface were essential for learners at the initial and early stages of reading. The range and variation of individual letters involving script styles were problematic for these learners. For instance, the slightest variation in Chinese can change the meaning of a character. It is appropriate that early literacy learners of any age need consistency. When students move grades in primary school the writing stays constant, and therefore we advocate a consistency of style for adult early literacy learners.

Students and or their family members expressed concern that they couldn't read teachers' writing on the board (eg. letters were joined, unclear, too small for many of these early literacy learners). Several students commented on the small variations between letters used over the project and we explicitly showed how these variations were formed from a standard *(see writing competencies 1 and 2)*. We found when tracking learners' progress that a consistent style of writing – used by three different teachers – was essential for the learners to be able to read both the worksheets and the whiteboard. They were then able to continue progressing in their reading and writing in general English "slow-paced classes".

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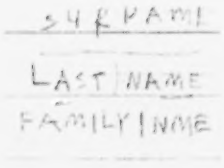
We consider that this was the salient factor in learners' ability to progress through a pathway. It can be also threatening to teachers who may not want to change their worksheets. We recommend, therefore, that a small team of teachers work together, and/or that workbooks be developed to assist with relative consistency of script style (as discussed in the Recommendations). Students would still be exposed to the different printing used by volunteer tutors. The MLM also provides for tasks and activities which provide explicit links to authentic environmental texts, as previously detailed.

We used characteristics of the script style that learners' children are taught in school, so that again, the hand printed/written text they encounter at home has a degree of consistency. This could also help to reinforce family literacy (Auerbach, 1992).

Again, in foregrounding the study, it was found that learners after 500 hours of general classes, did not realise that upper and lower case letters had the same name. (refer to MLM Competencies 1,2,3)

The study revealed that it is easier for an educated learner (eg. Bands B and C) to fill in the gaps of a worksheet which has either inconsistent/blurred writing, words accidentally cut off by the photocopier, or grey backgrounds – because through schooling they have had 'prior contextual knowledge' with *written* language. Stanovich (1995, p. 90-91) reveals that 'word recognition of better readers is not characterized by more reliance on contextual information...in fact it is poor readers who guess from context – out of necessity because their decoding skills are so weak'. This further explains why environmental and authentic texts are particularly helpful. We found that written language presented on a worksheet was usually more confusing than the same text located in its real context – for example, product labels. Similarly, high quality copies were essential. We see the movement towards increasing abstraction of contextual information (regarding the quality of written information used in the classroom) as follows:



Learner S.6 term 2

The real item in its authentic context (eg. 'walk' sign)
➜ once removed
➜ a colour photograph of the item ➜ a black and white photo ➜ a photocopy of the photo ➜ a photocopy of a photocopy of the photo ➜ word out of context ➜ photocopy of the decontextualised word ➜ a photocopy of a photocopy of the decontextualised word ➜ ...

...In the context of Learning to Learn

In order to learn written vocabulary, the learners needed to be introduced to a word out of context (such as written on a whiteboard) but again with attention to clear printed script.

This enabled a learner to negotiate meaning through oral interaction and operate at a deeper level of generative processing (Nation, 1997). We built on learning to learn (Willing,

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1991) – using language through learning about language – such as *mnemonics* and *chunking* (e.g. "bean" for Beams Rd; "after" for Arthur St. – memorizing phone numbers by grouping them). Simple metalanguage concepts (such as length of word , shape, sound) are also helpful here We also taught for transfer to demonstrate the use of language features in other contexts, as being able to perform one task did not seem sufficient to transfer the competency, and this transfer is built into the MLM (refer also MLM Learning to-learn competency 3, as previously mentioned).

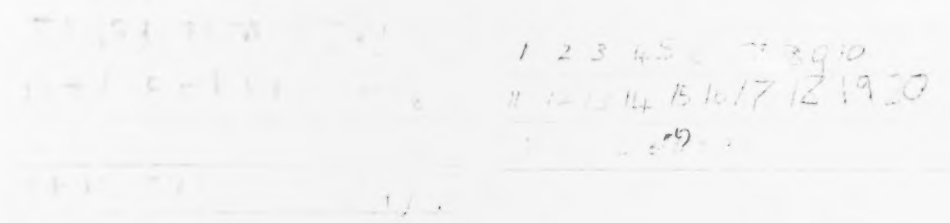
As requested by the students and as a result of feedback from their families, we responded to the exclusion of computer literacy competencies in CSWE I. In the first two terms of 1996, there was some reticence about using computers, because the programs which the learners could use were useful for the 'labelling' of single word items alone (although they enjoyed using them in the allocated couple of hours per week). However when we went on field trips, they were seen to apply vocabularly learned from the computer programmes and we became aware of the motivating force of technology (Knobel and Lankshear, 1995). Further interactive programmes were purchased through the centre.

The youngest learner in the study (Y.25) who could not physically write (that is, form the letters) was desperate to learn to type on the computer keyboard, and therefore bypass the need to actually scribe the language. Unfortunately, access into further classes still required him to write, although he was not motivated to do so. The following reflects our views, however unable we were to satisfy his needs in this area:

> *There is a great temptation to restrict students' use of computers until they are able to do an activity using 'pencil and paper'. This often means, for example, that students learn 'to write a simple sentence' and then are encouraged or expected to 'write a simple sentence using the computer', as a further outcome or stage. This is not only an artificial skill order, but also fails to capitalise on the motivating power of the computer. Starting with computer-based activities may be the perfect method of creating the very first simple sentence*
>
> *(Harriman & Blackwell, 1998, p.147).*

S.6 term 1 (below), 1996

Entry and exit points for handwriting script were taught through the language used for directions, as unlearning the formation of a letter is problematic. Once automatic, an incorrect movement becomes increasingly difficult to change (Sasson 1995)



Learner S.6 (above, term 1, 1996) and (below), completed under test conditions, (end of term 1, 1997 – after approx. 300 hours of "Literacy" and 200 hours of general English- with a break of two terms in between the general English)

Task: Write a short description of your house or flat.
Write approximately 5 seatonces.
You can use a dictionary.
Time: 30 minutes.

This house is high and the yard is big.
This house is new
Thas six bedrooms
Thas a stairs
This house is big
This house is near station
This house is near Thesshop

BELOW: D.15, week one, early July 96 (left), end July 1996 (bottom left) and one year later, after 400 hours of "Literacy class". Note: D.15 copied from the model of a postcard, but could read back her writing independently.

Today is Thursday
July 1996
yesterday was Wednesday
Tomorrow will be Friday
This Morning
6.15 AM

12 6 97
Dear Sister
How are you? we are
all well We Went on
a bus trip to the
Glasshouse Mountains and
Mary Cairncross Park.
It's a beautiful
area We Walked in the
rainforest + had a picnic Lunch
Bye for now.
Marian XX

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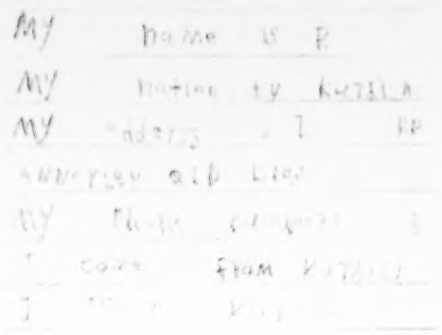
BELOW: R.13 week one , April 96 (left) after a 300-350 hour course of general English; end of term after much absence illness/trauma (right) ;



Learner R.13 after a 2nd term of high attendance (maximum total literacy of 180-200 hours over a six month period). Note how the "year 2 training lines" in the previous sample seem to confuse them (also learner S.6)

Although the final writing sample is proportionately larger, the script itself reveals a very fine motor control. Note also the less formulaic language and the use of personal and possessive pronouns in context (personal details were correct in both samples, except the first, which reflected all that R.13 felt comfortable in writing). She could not write in her first language.

Directions were introduced at an earlier level than in the CSWE documents *as existed at that time (Certificate II)*, because they became essential on field trips and to assist with letter formation. Directional terms such as top, bottom, up, down , around, across, start, stop/finish, left and right, are taught to enable learners to talk about how to form English letters – that is, directions for handwriting can be done in the context of road signs (eg. stop sign, round about, keep left) and giving these directions to each other – again developing language through learning about language (see spoken language competencies 7 and 8).

Not that we are trying to show that a writing script necessarily reveals an ability to read! The notion of copying without meaning was discouraged, as this seemed to be a more common behaviour of this type of learner who had wanted to 'roleplay' literate behaviour in large general English classes.

There was also a common conception that 'literacy' students were largely those who couldn't form letters or write their names. This notion seems to have been more prevalent in the ESL area, that is, more so than other specials needs groups, in which motor control plays little part in receptive language (eg. physical disability). However these migrant adults had fine motor co-ordination, as developed through their everyday lives, and the notion of pre-writing activities was considered inappropriate.

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Further Implications and Recommendations

1. That workbooks with local content and flexible topics (with which to enter and exit the course) be developed to help consistency of print and further learning in general English classes, to which Band A may need to access.
2. Feedback from community groups requested cultural orientation for learners – not just orientation to learning – but bilingual *spoken* assistance. We would suggest this in the form of a learning tape with strategies and expectations for learning (in addition to face-to-face contact). It is proposed that some kind of L1 motivational learning tape be made, to follow up with the initial orientation (so that learners can *more quickly* access and practice the strategies to enable them to learn).
3. That both competency and proficiency labels can reflect a valuing of certain kinds of learners and learning styles over others. That is, because a beginner Band A's writing is considered deficient and the person is often semi-skilled, then they can be "kept down" in their oracy, in the slow class, if participation in speaking and listening activities are taught through reading and writing (that is, requiring an ability to read text). This then requires a different kind of hands-on, high context dependent teaching approach, perhaps more like a 'drama class' for spoken language. As highlighted earlier, the Band A learners who were the focus of this study, largely had highly developed aural abilities.
4. Given the high attendance, this would imply that many needs of this largely female group were being met. According to a review of the AMEP program outcomes (McNaught and McGrath 1997) found that 52.1% of clients who discontinued, did so without any ASLPR language gain. Given the concerns with the ASLPR previously stated they suggested that:

   > *instances of high hours/low gain may suggest a need for curriculum modification, special arrangements for clients with learning difficulties or changes to delivery arrangements...it would be worth investigating whether cases of low hours/ low gain reflect some level of dissatisfaction with the program...* (McNaught and McGrath, p.33)

   As many learners continued to improve (see Appendix 3, Table 2) when placed into selected general English classes, this would tend to suggest that it was the approach rather than the teacher alone, which was responsible for the improvements which took place in their learning.
5. This would tend to reveal the benefit of further training for teachers involved with this kind of group of literacy learners. Alternatively, a team of teachers within the Migrant program, could be used to do professional development in literacy issues for ESOL learners.
6. We would agree technically with Ramm's (1992) recommendation that learners be grouped into classes according to their educational level (with the Band A cut off point of 7 years of education in L1). It was widely observed that many Certificate I general classes were "split" into differing needs for the written word as an aid to memory (as in worksheets) versus those who could not easily read the sheets and improve commensurately with their aural and other abilities. However, in practice this could be socially restrictive for students who wish to integrate and/or not possible with limited student numbers.
7. Further to the above, that higher certificate level students operate as mentors to beginner students. Additionally, that volunteer-tutors be integrated into the everyday workings of classes containing these learners – preferably to be supported

by such activities/tasks as found in the MLM, which will assist with the development of underlying competencies.

8. Particularly for the male learners in the study, it would have been helpful if their English language programs could have been integrated into vocational access, so that their language and literacy learning was complementary to vocational skills. As Ramm (1992, p.30) indicated:

   This kind of program would enable students to develop language and vocational skills concurrently from the beginning, avoiding the current situation where English levels required for entry into skills based training are beyond the grasp of most informal learners. It is also likely to make their language learning more effective as the language taught is related to concrete, practical matters.

   The MLM would seem to be ideally situated to become a component of a vocational access course. The claim for this is based on its focus on oracy/spoken language and the attention it gives to the enabling of simple written language tasks, in addition to the choice inherent for the learners, to follow topics in which to develop their language literacy and learning.

9. To optimize their time, given that learners have only 510 AMEP hours , it would seem that part-time study of 10-12 hours per week, provides them with more time for reinforcement and language acquisition. That is, they can learn over a longer period of time, rather than using all of their hours quickly. A new system requirement, which was introduced during the study, meant that part-time students, not on a pension, were required to seek work. This we found was an unrealistic expectation when the logistics of settlement in a new country, domestic duties and learning were analyzed. We would suggest their hours to be "topped up" only if necessary, or if they desire, through the flexible delivery of such a supported curriculum program as the MLM, in a learning centre with computer facilities.

10. Although the underpinning competencies in the curriculum modules could more effectively capture and measure learners' *linguistic progress* over time, it is also necessary to consider the simultaneous progress of *non-linguistic characteristics* such as: confidence, self-esteem and social well-being while adjusting to living in a new country with marked cultural differences – and often recovering from past trauma, separated from an extended family and a well-integrated social network.

Meta-reflection: Reflection on the learning cycles, problems encountered and thoughts for future research

The co-operation and support of administration during the period of the research to retain the teacher-researchers on the programme, is essential. This did happen up to the point of having done the data collection and analysis, MLM tables and evaluating our findings. The writing up of the research was done over a year, when we were working on another special needs programme. Whilst this called for adjustments from us, it was also fortuitous, as it gave a distance from which to view it, from another frame of reference. It was also found to be helpful with the special needs/disability L1 learners in literacy and numeracy classes.

There was some access to academic supervision outside our formal enrolment in post graduate courses on language and literacy. We would recommend a coaching or mentoring role of an academic in the research. This in turn could lend credibility to teacher-practitioners' research in the eyes of colleagues. The research would be recognised by an external organisation and therefore valued particularly by management, which could expedite the process. This would also enable academics access to authentic action learning scenarios – scenarios where grounded theory develops to affect improvements in teaching practice.

However, if the study had been formalised this may have limited the gathering of data. Although at times it may have been desirable to have had a more clearly defined 'dual role' as practitioner and researcher, it was possible for authentic relationships to develop with all participants.

Theory generated by teachers, which is grounded in practice is relevant and should be accepted as valid, and not viewed as deficient because it does not fit current orthodoxy or academically established theory. After all, the teaching context is the authentic test site for theoretical postulates.

It was rewarding to be investigating an area which has been so under-researched. The practical application of the topic lent itself to collaborative team work, and in this sense the networking and professional development required in opening up ones' classroom to scrutiny was both challenging but empowering. That is, it either confirmed or disconfirmed the approaches and helped to further focus the questions.

In our write-up we have not had space to cover the finer technical issues relating to outcomes assessment (Brindley, 1989; 1994; 1998). We have chosen instead to flag practical applications and evidence for the approaches outlined. The MLM curriculum module/s have been an attempt at a working document designed to be used with specific learners, stemming from their kinds of learning needs, in a small-scale context. However it may have potential for broader applications. If Certificate I is pitched at the level one of the AQF, then there would be learners who could *not match its entry levels*, let alone its benchmark standards. We would suggest that the figures previously documented would strongly suggest the need for additional curriculum modules, which could more effectively *capture the underpinning competencies of frameworks* to provide access to more effective learner pathways. For instance, only 8% of clients with limited formal education or a low level of literacy in their first language attained the target level III; 43% did not even meet the exit level requirements at the lower I and II levels of the CSWE (McNaught & McGrath 1997).

Although this was locally conducted research, we hope that the learner group has been sufficiently described to be relevant to similar groups within the ESOL area. This does not suggest that we are claiming transferability of identical issues and achievements. It has shown however, the potential of such a group of Band A special needs learners, given conditions of high support and *carefully matched* teaching, with a high degree of commitment towards them developing literacy and language learning.

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Appendix 1: MULTIPLE LITERACIES MODULE – SPECIAL NEEDS / BAND A ESOL

LEARNING-TO-LEARN SKILLS

1. Is organised to participate in learning activities across a variety of community environments
2. Can participate in class/group activities
3. Can use meta-language and meta-learning to assist in the learning process
4. Can use a cassette player and other audio-visual equipment
5. Can use a computer

SPOKEN LANGUAGE

LISTENING / SPEAKING

1. Can respond to requests and personally relevant spoken questions/information
2. Can initiate personally relevant spoken information
3. Can provide a short oral description of a physical ailment
4. Can show understanding through oral response of anothers' spoken description/information text
5. Can request items/goods/service information using spoken language
6. Can provide a simple oral instruction relating routine experience
7. Can follow spoken directions
8. Can give spoken directions
9. Can talk about personal future events and activities to enable community access
10. Can tell a simple recount through language experience and shared experience

LEARNING-TO-LEARN SKILLS

Competency 1: Is organised to participate in learning activities across a variety of community environments

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can bring correct equipment to class • Can attempt homework tasks	• Brings correct equipment to class. • Attempts homework tasks – eg. takes home audio read-along material.	• Homework may be audio tape, not paper-based only • L1 assistance (where available) • Highly contextualised	**Example Activites/Tasks** • Observation by teacher based on performance indicators
• Can organise handouts in a folder for referral	• Organises handouts in folder. • Refers to previous work in exercise book or folder.	• Ongoing assessment • Student responds from teacher initiation – use of gesture by student	*Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords – pictures/mime – of feelings/opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*
• Can attend class and community access activities	• Attends class and community access activities.		
• Can make use of a variety of learning options	• Makes use of other learning options available – eg. learning centre/ local library.	*Within familiar activities*	
• Can negotiate with teacher the use of cassette player and/or read-along books, to take home.	• Negotiates with teacher the use of take-home cassette player and/or read-along books- eg. borrowed from library and returned		

Performance indicators are listed to reveal the minimum performance required for the element concerned
Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

Competency 2: Can participate in class/group activities.

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can request worksheets and materials using spoken language	• Requests worksheets and materials ("Can I have ---please?).		**Example Activites/Tasks**
• Can follow simple oral instructions and requests	• Responds to simple oral instructions and requests of teacher and other students (eg. "bring tomorrow").	• May use gesture, at this time, to support oral requests, which may be telegraphic.	• Observation by teacher based on performance indicators • Noted in progress diary/checklist
• Can seek assistance and initiate clarification according to need	• Indicates need for assistance and seeks and initiates clarification.		*Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords – pictures/mime – of feelings/opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*
• Can participate willingly in pair and group work	• Participates willingly in pair/group work.		
• Can listen to other students' responses	• Listens to peers	*Within familiar activities*	

Performance indicators are listed to reveal the minimum performance required for the element concerned
Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

Competency 3: Can use meta-language and meta-learning to assist in learning process

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
Memory strategies • Can respond to the use of memory strategies – mnemonics and chunking	• Responds to the use of mnemonics and chunking (eg. beans for Beams Rd; after for Arthur St – memorising phone number by grouping nos) - sounds the same (eg. hungry, not angry) - visual cues, visualisation (length/shape of word) - repetition	• L1 assistance where appropriate • Explicit Teacher modelling, mime	**Example Activites/Tasks** • Ongoing teacher observation noted in learner progress diary
• Can begin to use other memory strategies for learning spellings/spoken and written language	• Begins to use strategies for learning spellings/spoken and written language, by: - as above - learning to identify patterns – eg six, sixteen, sixty, sixty-six - rhythm/beat/syllables (drum beats) (rap music/jazz chant) - look/say/cover/write/check/repeat - simple mind maps through use of coloured pens, highlighters, drawings.	• Strategies continually modelled by teacher; process orientation • Teacher can prompt and assist student to notice errors • Student can be encouraged to "invent" spelling to communicate whilst undertaking the process involved in written language – *successive approximations** as in *learning to speak*	• Uses process in workbook/personalised alphabet wordbank • Teacher observation/learner progress checklist
• Can begin to notice/distinguish the difference between their spelling and the correct form	• Begins to notice/distinguish the difference between their spelling and the correct form		
• Can recognise the need to reinforce learning by repeating a language item/task/activity	• Recognises the need to reinforce learning by repeating a language item/task/activity	• Teacher models the role of memory processing strategies: generative processing	• Ask teacher to repeat activity .

• Can use positive self-talk as a strategy for remembering	• Uses positive self-talk as a strategy for remembering "You can do it"; "I know you can"; "I can do it" " I can remember"	• Teacher continually models, before said aloud by student. • L1 assistance where appropriate	• Self-esteem game/feelings
Learning style/approach			
• Can demonstrate that learning to read and write involves more than just copying	• Demonstrates that learning to read and write involves more than just copying, by "reading back" own writing.	• Teacher models reading back	• Students "read back" own writing in workbook or as copied from board
• Can talk about the process involved in language learning/acquisition	• Talks about the process involved in language learning/acquisition. Eg: 1st. Listen 2nd. Speak 3rd. Read 4th Write "we listen (with our) ears" "we read (with our) eyes"	• Highly contextualised • Picture cues/mime • L1 assistance where appropriate	• interview/ small group interaction • Marking and choosing appropriate picture or symbol • learner checklist
• Can show a preference for learning methods/styles and discriminate which are the more effective for own learning	• Shows a preference for learning methods/styles * Discriminates effective learning methods	As above *Within familiar activities*	• group discussion, learner peer/self-assessment ***Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords – pictures/mime – of feelings/opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.***

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Performance indicators are listed to reveal the minimum performance required for the element concerned
Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

Competency 4: Can use a cassette player and other audio-visual equipment

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can insert tape into cassette deck on either A or B side upon request.	• Attempts to use read-a-long material with audio complement • Distinguishes between sides A and B of a cassette tape.	• Use of real objects to demonstrate performance, rather than worksheet.	**Example Activites/Tasks** • Real object is used to demonstrate performance – noted by teacher against checklist
• Can rewind tape for repetition of learning and search for the beginning of a tape	• Rewinds tape to beginning on a designated side (eg. Side A "alphabet"; Side B "numbers").		• Teacher observation of a practical application
• Can identify controls of a casette player.	• Indicates control buttons on cassette player – volume, tone, play, stop, pause, rewind and record buttons.	• Confirms/indicates receptive undertsanding. eg gesture backwards to indicate rewind .	*Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords – pictures/mime – of feelings/opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*
• Can modulate volume and tone on learning equipment.	• Effectively uses controls – eg. on cassette player, TV and language master. • Adjusts volume to suit self.		
• Can manipulate headphones.	• Manipulates headphones and plugs into outlet	*Within familiar activities*	
• Can match positive and negative to the pattern inside the battery case, to replace batteries	• Matches positive and negative to the pattern inside the battery case, to replace batteries		

Performance indicators are listed to reveal the minimum performance required for the element concerned
Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

M. Horton and D. Horton compiled Dec 1997

Competency 5: Can use a computer

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can bootup and shut down a computer.	• Switches on and off correctly.	• Use of **real equipment** rather than worksheet.	**Example Activites/Tasks**
• Can read and choose icon for application from the main menu.	• Identifies and chooses correct program for learning needs. • Select from options on computer screen with mouse (from an interactive beginner program at an appropriate level -eg. "Interactive Picture Dictionary")	• Icon must already be familiar to learner, having been taught how to access	• Real object is used to demonstrate performance – noted by teacher against checklist • Teacher observation of a practical application
• Can manipulate keyboard's basic function and direction keys	• Uses arrow keys and backspace key as required to move around program		
• Can exit a program back to the main menu options	• Exits back to main menu		*Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords – pictures/mime – of feelings/opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*
• Can identify the main external components of a computer.	• Knows names (receptive or expressive understanding) for the most common components of the computer – ie. keyboard, tv monitor, mouse, program, sound – speakers, CD, disk, printer.	• May indicate receptive understanding. e.g pointing to item stated (show me the monitor, what is this?; Where is the keyboard?") *Within familiar activities*	
• Can request help with spoken language.	• Requests advice with comments ("no sound"; "mouse (not)...isn't working").		

Performance indicators are listed to reveal the minimum performance required for the element concerned
Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

WRITTEN LANGUAGE

READING

1. Can distinguish between upper and lower case letters and use meaningfully
2. Attends to graphological features of text
3. Can begin to use grapho-phonic cues to decode text at the word and/or clause level
4. Can read social sight signs and environmental text in the community
5. Can read and use automatic vending machines in local community setting
6. Can match high-frequency key words/clauses to pictures or real objects
7. Can read a simple form/ID slip
8. Can identify official notices
9. Can identify essential information from a short information text
10. Can make use of indexes in directories (Lit II – optional)

WRITING

1. Practises the conventions of English handwritten script
2. Can effectively use script to communicate meaning at the word and/or clause level
3. Can complete a simple form/ID slip
4. Can write a short absence note (Lit II – optional)
5. Can write a short greeting (Lit II – optional)

Lit I is the minimum performance required – Lit II are only considered to be possible extensions

WRITTEN LANGUAGE – READING

Competency 1: Can distinguish between upper and lower case letters and use meaningfully.

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can match upper to lower case and indicate reasons for using	• Matches upper to lower case and indicate reasons for using (eg. "big letter – for peoples' names")	• Own and another students' name • Clear, consistent printed script	**Example Activites/Tasks** Observation by teacher based on performance indicators – checklist and/or noted in learner progress diary
• Can identify upper and lower case letters in social sight signs and environmental text	• Identifies upper and lower case letters in social sight signs and environmental text (eg. packaging/real containers/household groceries/newspaper print/shopping brochures).	• Lit I – use of realia – actual packaging not just reproductions on worksheet	*Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords-pictures/mime-of feelings/opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*
• Can identify upper case letters on computer keyboard	• Identifies upper case letters on computer keyboard (eg. Capital "I" looks like small "l" etc)	*Within familiar activities*	
• Can use "Caps lock" key on computer keyboard according to need.	• Uses "Caps lock" key on computer keyboard according to need.		

Performance indicators are listed to reveal the minimum performance required for the element concerned
Lit I is the minimum performance required – Lit II are only considered to be possible extensions
Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

Competency 2 Attends to graphological features of text *

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can identify a full stop, Capital letter, question mark and the apostrophe of a contraction	• Identifies a full stop, Capital letter, question mark and the apostrophe of a contraction (eg. don't in DON'T WALK)	• Identified in context • If photocopying is used then high quality reproduction, with attention to clear script and graphics	**Example Activites/Tasks** • Teacher observation noted in learner progress diary/checklist *Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords-pictures/mime-of feelings/opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful*
• Can use metalanguage/language concepts modelled by the teacher to demonstrate the uses of these features	• Uses metalanguage/language concepts modelled by the teacher to demonstrate the uses of these features (eg. full stop – stop – like a stop sign (show stop sign/large picture of); apostrophe – for a short word (gesture "short") ....I'm, I am...means the same, etc).		
• Can link different graphics of environmental text to consistent printed script modelled by teacher	• Links different graphics of environmental text to consistent printed script modelled by teacher.	• Realia/photo of environmental text is modelled/analysed with clear standardised script to show variation and similarities, in fonts/letter styles and formations. *Within familiar activities*	

* Learner may be able to read the word/letter, but can't read the print copy or whiteboard

Performance indicators are listed to reveal the minimum performance required for the element concerned
Lit I is the minimum performance required – Lit II are only considered to be possible extensions
Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

Competency 3: Can begin to use grapho-phonic cues to decode text at the word and/or clause level

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can notice distinctive features of letters	• Notices distinctive features of letters	• Contextualised	**Example Activites/Tasks**
		• Lit I – recognises within a word; Lit II – recognises within a clause	Teacher observation of learners recorded in progress diary/checklist
• Can notice letter groupings and sounds in the context of whole words and/or clauses	• Notices letter groupings and sounds in the context of whole words and/or clauses		*Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords-pictures/mime-of feelings/opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*
• Can "have a go" and take risks	• Can "have a go" and take risks	• Clear and consistent printing style from teacher and/or clearly printed font	
• Can identify some words and letters in context	• Identifies some words and letters in context.	• Asks for assistance/clarification	
		• previously and consistently modelled by the teacher.	
		• Teacher models links for student of different font/text styles encountered in environmental text eg. social sight signs, fruit shop signs	
		Within familiar activities	

Adapted from Education Department Western Australia (1994) First Steps Reading Developmental Continuum

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Lit I is the minimum performance required – Lit II are only considered to be possible extensions
Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

M. Horton and D. Horton compiled Dec 1997

Competency 4: Can read social sight signs and environmental text in the community

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can identify signs in local environment by reading aloud the key/main words	• Identifies signs in local environment by reading aloud the key/main words	• Teacher initiates response through modelling of reading/identification	**Example Activites/Tasks** Learners read social sight signs and environmental text in real community setting and/with follow-up language tasks to confirm acquisition *Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords-pictures/mime-of feelings/opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*
• Can independently name commonly occuring signs.	• Independently names commonly occuring signs.	• Use of real signs and authentic materials, including those for commerical use – eg. advertising billboards, blackboard signs (fruit/vege shop) *	
		• Use of real setting	
• Can identify grapho-phonic features of signs	• Identifies grapho-phonic features of signs eg. letter shapes, differences between the graphics used and the classroom/whiteboard script used)	• Colour photographs or high quality copy	
		• by answering orally or by pointing to information/sign requested	
• Can show understanding of the meaning of commonly occuring signs	• Shows understanding of the meaning of commonly occuring signs	*Within familiar activities*	

* This competency encompasses more than simply road safety signs/logos

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Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

Competency 5: Can read and use automatic vending machines in local community setting

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can recognise steps involved in procedure	• Recognises steps involved in procedure eg. Select, check, put/insert , take/remove	• Lit I – snack machine, automatic ticket machine – grid references apply to snack machine (eg. B6 for Mars bar)	**Example Activites/Tasks** Teacher observation of learner performing task and follow-up language activities
• Can identify key high frequency vocabulary used to perform action	• Identifies key high frequency vocabulary used eg. snack machine select, insert, push, press, button/key, coin return, change eg. automatic ticket machine (train platform) enter, remove, student/concession/pensioner, single/return, destination/suburb eg. ATM/Flexiteller PIN number, select account, savings/cheque/credit, withdraw/cash out, deposit, processing, remove card	• Lit II- ATM/ flexi teller • Reads real object in setting eg. on excursion with teacher/tutor and/or A4 photo of actual machine • Responds orally to comprehension questions which are oral, to ensure that instructions for assessment are not more difficult than task completion itself. *Within familiar activities*	*Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords-pictures/mime-of feelings/opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*

Performance indicators are listed to reveal the minimum performance required for the element concerned
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Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

Competency 6: Can match high-frequency key words/clauses to pictures or real objects.

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can recognise high-frequency key words/clauses	• Recognises high-frequency key words eg. sick, school, student, child, have, don't go, cook.		**Example Activites/Tasks** Diary note in learner profile
• Can distinguish warning signs and cautions on medicine labels.	• Distinguishes warning signs and cautions on medicine labels by matching high-frequency key words/clauses. eg. tablets, capsules, headache, flu, sore throat, pain, fever, dose, every 6 hours, half to one tablet, maximum, if symptoms persist, seek medical advice, strictly as directed, expiry date	• Enlarged high quality photocopy • May need to physically match word/clause(paper slips) to real object eg. expiry date headache	*Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords-pictures/mime-of feelings/opinions: . eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*
• Can match sentences to pictures as required.	• Matches sentences to pictures as required.	Clear graphics/pictures and/or real objects (eg. medicines, packaging) *Within familiar activities*	

This competency also has embedded numeracy and connects with speaking and listening competencies (eg. 3)

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Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

Competency 7: Can read a simple form/ID slip

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can read information on a simple ID form/slip	• Reads information from an ID card /slip **Lit I** – name, address, telephone number, signature • **Lit II- extension** – DOB (date of birth), language, country, emergency contact	• Reads out loud and gives the answers • Within familiar activities • Contextualised and simplified -eg. teacher-made ID card for wallet;	**Example Activites/Tasks** Learners read aloud personal information on simple ID form/slip, Health care card, student card, drivers licence, railway slip, student library card
• Can realise the value of carrying personal ID for safety/access purposes	• Demonstrates the value of personal ID for safety/access purposes, by: ** - carrying ID cards/Medicare card in wallet/purse - by responding to request for ID to clarify personal information	• Bilingual assistance where possible *Within familiar activities*	*Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords-pictures/mime-of feelings/opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*

*Humanitarian and refugee students – Most of them have come from a situation in which nationality is the reason why they are here – therefore nationality can be traumatising.
** Students can also show reluctance in carrying personal documentation with them.)

Performance indicators are listed to reveal the minimum performance required for the element concerned
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Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

Competency 8: Can identify official notices

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can distinguish an official notice from junk mail	• Distinguishes official notice from junk mail – eg. shopping flyer, Council rates	• Use of realia and/or high quality copy • Lit II – identifies due date and amount on bill	**Example Activites/Tasks** Learners identify official notices from letter box items brought to class and other local community/city notices
• Can locate logo and relate what organisation a letter comes from	• Locates logo and relates what organisation a letter comes from – eg. DSS, City Council, School emblem.		*Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords-pictures/mime-of feelings/opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*
• Can identify bill and/or permission slips from child's school and locates due date and amount (Lit II)	• Identifies bill and/or permission slip from child's school and locates due date and amount (Lit II)	*Within familiar activities*	

Performance indicators are listed to reveal the minimum performance required for the element concerned
Lit I is the minimum performance required – Lit II are only considered to be possible extensions
Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

Competency 9: Can identify essential information from a short information text

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can identify essential information from an appointment card	• Identifies essential information from an appointment card – time, date, location (eg. doctor, dental hospital).	• Flyer/text with **three** pieces of information (eg. time/hours, days, name of store/person, merchandise)	**Example Activites/Tasks** Learners recognise where key information might be located and how it is signalled in short information texts, such as: - flyers - junk mail - opening and closing time boards in real setting - simple invitation *Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords-pictures/mime-of feelings/opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*
• Can relate opening and closing times from a given shop/health centre in a real setting.	• Relates opening and closing times from a given shop/health centre in a real setting.	• In real setting/realia and/or • Colour photograph of text eg. opening/closing times board	
• Can identify essential information from a simple invitation	• Identifies essential information from an invitation (eg. name, date, time, location)	• Oral response and oral comprehension questions • Typefaced texts rather than handwritten and/or consistent printed script *Within familiar activities*	

Performance indicators are listed to reveal the minimum performance required for the element concerned
Lit I is the minimum performance required – Lit II are only considered to be possible extensions
Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

Competency 10: Can make use of indexes in directories (LIT II – optional)

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can alphabetise to locate a given suburb	• Alphabetises to locate a given suburb, from a simplified listing	• Use of realia, such as A-Z suburb listing on train ticket machine	**Example Activites/Tasks** Learner locates information using : • personalised index phone card • suburb guide • word bank • building directory *Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords-pictures/mime-of feelings/opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*
• Can alphatetise to locate an emergency phone number	• Alphatetises to locate an emergency phone number, from personalised index card. eg. doctor, interpreter, sister, childcare, school	• Simulated activity with real telephone • Use of personal word bank or picture dictionary • simple directory in a familiar local context *Within familiar activities*	
• Can locate a known word in personalised dictionary	• Locates a known word in personalised dictionary		
• Can locate a shop name or department from the directory of building	• Locates a shop name or department from the Directory of building (eg. TAFE directory, Shopping centre, small local Medical Centre)		

Performance indicators are listed to reveal the minimum performance required for the element concerned
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Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

WRITTEN LANGUAGE – WRITING

Competency 1: Practises the conventions of English handwritten script

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can correctly identify alphabet letters, both in sequence and out of sequence.	• Correctly identifies alphabet letters, both in sequence and out of sequence.		**Example Activites/Tasks**
• Can use correct entries and exits in forming letters, to assist speed of writing.	• Uses correct entries and exits in forming letters, to assist speed of writing.	• Clear and consistent/standardised printing modelled by the teacher	Teacher observation and learner workbook samples within ongoing activities/tasks
• Can use left to right and top to bottom orientation for print.	• Uses left to right and top to bottom orientation for print.		*Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords-pictures/mime-of feelings/opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*
• Can leave a space between word-like clusters of letters.	• Leaves a space between word-like clusters of letters.	• Explicitly modelled and reinforced	
• Can write on lines after gradually mastering the correct formations of letters.	• Writes on lines after gradually mastering the correct formations of letters.	• Teacher progressively demonstrates process of letter variation, formation and meaning eg. *I* = I *i* = i not j or *j* *f* = f not t or *t*	
• Can use appropriate posture for writing and takes frequent posture and exercise breaks	• Uses appropriate posture for writing and takes frequent posture and exercise breaks	• Explicitly demonstrated by the teacher *Within familiar activities*	

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Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

Competency 2:Can effectively use script to communicate meaning at the word and/or clause level

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can read back own writing/printed script	• Reads back own writing/printed script	Lit I – at the word level Lit II – at the clause level	**Example Activites/Tasks**
• Can use writing to convey meaning	• Uses writing to convey meaning		Ongoing teacher observation within classroom/community based activities and tasks
• Can demonstrate one-to-one correspondence between written and spoken word	• Demonstrates one-to-one correspondence between written and spoken word	• Explicitly modelled by the teacher *Within familiar activities*	Checlist/learner progress diary *Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords-pictures/mime-of feelings/opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*

Adapted from Education Department of Western Australia (1994) *First Steps Writing Developmental Continuum*

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Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

Competency 3: Can complete a simple form/ID slip

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can transfer information from an ID card by writing personal information correctly in appropriate space	• Transfers information from an ID card by writing personal information correctly in appropriate space **Lit I** – name, address, telephone number **Lit II- extension** – language, country, emergency contact	• Can seek clarification for reading of new form – ie where to put information – but must transfer writing from ID card themselves • Within familiar activities	**Example Activites/Tasks** Learners write personal information on simplified ID form/slip, by tramsferring information from an ID card/health care card/student card/ and/or drivers licence. Forms can include **simple** application for library borrowing, railway slips and goods returned/refund slips
• Can sign name with personalised signature on an ID card	• Signs name with personalised signature on an ID card eg. Health care card, student card (other – lotto card)	• Contextualised and simplified	*Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords-pictures/mime-of feelings/opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*
• Can demonstrate the value of personal ID for safety/access purposes by carrying in wallet/purse.	• Demonstrates the value of personal ID for safety/access purposes by carrying in wallet/purse	*Within familiar activities*	

Performance indicators are listed to reveal the minimum performance required for the element concerned
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Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

Competency 4.Can write a short absence note (Lit II – optional)

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can use simple greeting and closure	• Uses simple greeting and closure Eg. "Dear..., Sincerely	• Lit I – one simple clause or sentence	**Example Activites/Tasks**
• Can write basic message in past or present tense	• Writes basic message in past or present tense Eg. "Sammy was sick yesterday" "Sick today. Will be back tomorrow" (Lit II)	• Lit II – two simple clauses and writes date; future tense extensions • Highly contextualised	Learner writes a short absence note *Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords-pictures/mime-of feelings/opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*
• Can write date on note	• Writes date on note	*Within familiar activities*	

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Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

Competency 5. Can write a short greeting (Lit II – optional)

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can recognise common social formulaic expressions/terms	• Recognises common social formulaic expressions/terms Eg. "Happy birthday" to/from "Get well soon"	• Real cards to choose from • A variety of commercial font/script styles	**Example Activites/Tasks** Learners recognise and use common social formulaic expressions and terms to choose and replicate greeting on cards
• Can match formulaic expressions/terms to choose appropriate card	• Matches formulaic expressions/terms to choose appropriate card Happy birthday Get well soon Thank you	• Can match paper strips or formula in notebook (in front of them) to choose cards (2-3) • In real newsagency setting and class activities *Within familiar activities*	• checklist/learner progress diary *Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords-pictures/mime-of feelings/opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*
• Can replicate/copy formulaic language as appropriate to the greeting	• Replicates/copies formulaic language as appropriate to the greeting		

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M. Horton and D. Horton compiled Dec 1997

Appendix 1: MULTIPLE LITERACIES MODULE – SPECIAL NEEDS / BAND A ESOL

LEARNING-TO-LEARN SKILLS

1. Is organised to participate in learning activities across a variety of community environments
2. Can participate in class/group activities
3. Can use meta-language and meta-learning to assist in the learning process
4. Can use a cassette player and other audio-visual equipment
5. Can use a computer

SPOKEN LANGUAGE

LISTENING / SPEAKING

1. Can respond to requests and personally relevant spoken questions/information
2. Can initiate personally relevant spoken information
3. Can provide a short oral description of a physical ailment
4. Can show understanding through oral response of anothers' spoken description/information text
5. Can request items/goods/service information using spoken language
6. Can provide a simple oral instruction relating routine experience
7. Can follow spoken directions
8. Can give spoken directions
9. Can talk about personal future events and activities to enable community access
10. Can tell a simple recount through language experience and shared experience

LISTENING/SPEAKING

Competency 1. Can respond to personally relevant spoken questions/information*

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can answer questions related to personal identity	• answers questions related to personal identity repeats answer as required • involves: name, address, telephone number, language, country	• Oral response only • Lit I- one word answer • Lit II- clause ("I'm Yassin" "I'm from/come from...") *Within familiar activities*	**Example Activites/Tasks** Observation by teacher – key word checklist for student and/or volunteer/teacher. *Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords – pictures/mime – of feelings /opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*

*NB: Oral language development *builds the field* for reading and writing competencies 7/3 "can read/complete a simple form/ID slip" and all other speaking and listening competencies. It should not be treated as the main focus of the course in isolation from the other competencies

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M. Horton and D. Horton compiled Dec 1997

Competency 2 Can initiate personally relevant spoken questions*

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can ask personally relevant spoken questions • Can use the verbs to be, to have and to do in the present tense	• Uses question form to elicit personal information : "What is...,Where...(name, address, phone number, language, country) How many (children), How do you come to school?" • Extension: "Do you like? What do you like to do?"	Initial vocab building for Lit I – name, address, phone number (necessary for Module's ID reading and writing competency and other spoken competencies) • Lit I- one word question with intonation • Lit II- clause level question, involving wh-question forms *Within familiar activities*	**Example Activites/Tasks** Teacher observation and checklist *Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords – pictures/mime – of feelings /opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*

*NB: Oral language development *builds the field* for reading and writing competencies 7/3 'can read/complete a simple form/ID slip' and all other speaking and listening competencies. It should not be treated as the main focus of the course in isolation from the other competencies.

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Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

Competency 3 Can provide a short oral description of a physical ailment

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can provide labels of ailments orally, to support a brief description	• matches oral label with ailment	• Lit I – Use of pronouns and correct verb form not required • Lit II – use of pronouns and verb form	**Example Activites/Tasks**
• Can use the verbs "to be" and "to have"	• points to area and identifies orally when asked "Do you have (any) pain?"	• black and white pictorial support – discriminates between physical ailments	Can respond to pictorial stimulus – generates from a picture Pictorial sheet checklist/boardgame
	• student identifies location on the body, and describes orally, e.g "leg ... broken" "I have (a) headache/flu" " I've got (a) headache"	*Within familiar activities*	*Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for key words – pictures/mime – of feelings/opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*

Performance indicators are listed to reveal the minimum performance required for the element concerned
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M. Horton and D. Horton compiled Dec 1997

Multiple Literacies Module – Special Needs / Band A ESOL

Competency 4 Can show understanding through oral response of anothers' spoken description/information text.

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can identify main features of a person's or an objects's outward appearance. • Can identify clothing items	• Responds to everyday generative questions. (person) eg. How old is he? (age) What does he look like? (hair/eyes/height); What is he wearing? (clothing)...What does the person look like?...she has black hair....she is wearing. ...who is wearing a T-shirt today?"	• oral response • pictorial support or **real person**-discriminates over physical appearance and clothing items • eg car – pictorial support or **real object**-discriminates over physical attributes of colour and number. • consistent performance across 3 different pictorials/people/objects	**Example Activites/Tasks** Pictorial sheet checklist; game – eg. find real clothing item stated by teacher Use of real objects in setting – eg. teachers' carpark, street
• Can recognise and show understanding of verbs "to be" or "to have" in spoken interaction	• Responds to everyday generative questions: (object eg. **car**) "what colour...?"; "How many doors/wheels?" (back/front);" " does the back open?"; "it has...it is...")	• if tape is used, stop tape after each question to allow for student response; tape can be heard 3-5 times • correct use of pronouns is not essential (although the teacher would attend to/model correct pronoun usage in context)	*Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords – pictures/mime – of feelings/opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*
• Can begin to discriminate personal pronoun usage in context of oral interaction	• Begins to discriminate pronoun usage in context of oral interaction eg. I/you/he/she/it/we/they	*Within familiar activities*	

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Competency 5 Can request items/goods/service information using spoken language

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can give a simple question/statement to achieve a transaction.	• Gives a simple statement or asks a simple question to achieve a transaction eg. eg "Have you got..."; "Can I have ...please?; "orange juice thanks"; "Can you show me please?; "Take out/put in $50 please?"	• Use of articles is not essential (a/an/the) • Correct use of noun/plural is incidental to the request • Discriminates between small/medium (regular) or large canteen/counter items • Contextual support: Junk mail, real objects/location	**Example Activites/Tasks** • Students role-play and later demonstrate acquistion in real community setting • Checklist, diary note in learner profile
• Can ask basic questions about costs of goods/items or services and produce correct money.	• Asks basic questions about costs of goods/items or services (eg. bus/train) and produces correct money "How much to (the) city? • Shows correct money after hearing a price	• teacher/tutor – real voice – preferred to tape	Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords – pictures/mime – of feelings /opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.
• Can discriminate the approximate value of an item by matching price to a product. • see Reading competency 7.	• Discriminates the approximate value of an item by matching price to a product eg. bargain store wallet vs Italian leather wallet* (cheap/cheaper...expensive) eg. prices of food ($2.00 or $20.00 or $200.?)	• real objects/money • Lit 11 – use of place value after decimal point to 3 digits, or according to need • Lit 11 – can round up/down to nearest 5 cents *Within familiar activities*	

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Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

Competency 6 Can provide a simple oral instruction relating routine experience

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can give an oral instruction with action using main imperatives	• Uses main imperative and demonstrates with actions eg. how to (put, in, pour, pick up, close/open, turn)	• Student gives information orally • Uses 3 imperatives and 3 corresponding content words appropriate to the context	**Example Activites/Tasks** make ethiopian bread/ make a pot of tea/lay a table/sew on a button/ change a car tyre/ how to play a video
• Can give a short sequence of instructions using simple time markers	• Gives a short sequence of instructions using simple time markers (first, next/ then, after, last) eg. Fire drill, instructions to exit, safety instructions	• Use of articles and adjectives not required at this stage (noun/verb only) *Within familiar activities*	• Initially perform real task to elicit language • Later can use prop/pictures to generate language removed from immediate context (eg. spoken language and mimed action) • Checklist – diary note in learner profile *Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords – pictures/mime – of feelings/opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*

Language in Context: Could construct a photo/picture sequence with accompanying audio tape of spoken instructions. Lit II extensions could lay the ground work for simple written instructions, but focus for this competency is oral.

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Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

Competency 7: Can follow spoken directions

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can respond to simple spoken directions (receptive)	• Responds to simple spoken directions by performing action to comply (eg. pick up the box, take the box outside; put it on the table, next to Shao; put it behind Kulenta; put the pen in the box)	• Student must perform actions to demonstrate understanding • Stagger the directions to wait for student to respond Lit I – 2 directions Lit II- 3 directions • Direction can be repeated 2-3 times • Gesture can **not** accompany diection when being assessed *Within familiar activities*	**Example Activites/Tasks** Learner demonstrates receptive understanding/can follow spoken directions by: -Performing an action, -forming a letter/shape Checklist/diary note in learner profile *Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords – pictures/mime – of feelings /opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*
• Can demonstrate understanding of **location** through prepositional words and/or phrases	• Demonstrates understanding of **location** through prepositional words and/or phrases		
• Can follow directions for forming alphabet letters and/or simple shapes	• Follows directions for forming alphabet letters and/or simple shapes (up, down, around, across, top, bottom, on the left, go right, square, circle, triangle)		

Performance indicators are listed to reveal the minimum performance required for the element concerned
Lit I is the minimum performance required – Lit II are only considered to be possible extensions
Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

Competency 8: Can give spoken directions

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can initiate simple spoken directions **(expressive)**	• Can initiate simple spoken directions (eg. pick up the box, take the box outside; put it on the table, next to Leila; put it behind Kulenta; put the pen in the box)	• gesture can accompany/assist student initiated direction (but must not substitute) • Lit I – done as joint construction - may give isolated preposition words • Lit II – done independently - may give more isolated phrases	**Example Activites/Tasks** Through expressive language learners can give spoken directions by telling a partner/group how to: - place an object/s in a given location - form a simple shape or alphabet letter • Checklist, diary note – learner profile
• Can express **location** through prepositional words and/or phrases	• expresses **location** through prepositional words and/or phrases		*Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords – pictures/mime – of feelings /opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*
• Can give directions for forming alphabet letters and/or simple shapes	• gives directions for forming alphabet letters and/or simple shapes (up, down, around, across, top, bottom, on the left, go right, square, circle, triangle)	*Within familiar activities*	

Performance indicators are listed to reveal the minimum performance required for the element concerned
Lit I is the minimum performance required – Lit II are only considered to be possible extensions
Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

Competency 9: Can talk about personal future events and activities to enable community access *

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can answer questions about their own immediate future activities	• Answers questions about their immediate future activities	Lit I – limited use of personal pronouns and articles Lit II – more use of personal pronouns and articles	**Example Activites/Tasks** Students ask and answer questions about their own future activities and events, through the following:
• Can begin to use time markers/tags	• Begins to use time markers/tags (after, tomorrow, tonight, next week) e.g "Tommorow will be Wednesday "After class I will... go to the city/visit my friend After class I'm going to... **	Lit I – teacher modelling and joint construction Lit II- less support, with some joint construction	- teacher observation in oral interaction (checklist) - response to students/tutor board game "What are you doing tomorrow?
• Can ask questions about others' immediate future activities	• "What are you doing (now) * tomorrow ?" after class ?" on the weekend ?" "I'm going to ...(catch the bus go to the city/DSS)	*Within familiar activities*	*Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords – pictures/mime – of feelings /opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*
• Can use personal pronouns	• Uses personal pronouns (eg. 1/you/ he/she/it/we/they)		

*Focus on the future relieves the stress on students' trauma of past experiences.
Verb doesn't change in future tense, so the transfer from present to future is easier than verb changes in the past (eg. I cook every day..I will cook tonight; I'm going to cook tonight)

** At this level will and going to are used interchangeably – to focus on future actions – subtle nuances are less significant. Teacher may choose to use mime to indicate spontaneous and definite use of will. Structures can be modelled incidentally through oral interaction.

Performance indicators are listed to reveal the minimum performance required for the element concerned
Lit I is the minimum performance required – Lit II are only considered to be possible extensions
Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

Competency 10: Can tell a simple recount through language experience and shared experience

ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	RANGE STATEMENTS	ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES
• Can use the most frequent strong action verbs in the past (simple)	• Uses the most frequent strong action verbs in the past (simple) especially : to be, to have & to go eg. I went to the city...to the CES; Yesterday I was sick, I had...	• Lit I & II- joint construction • Lit I – 1-2 sentences Lit II – 3 sentences • Should be a recent activity/group activity to allow for group oral interaction and support ie. a shared experience in a real setting/context	**Example Activites/Tasks** Learners respond to teacher's question by retelling recent events in the past – eg. group outing/excursion, weekend. *Ongoing self-evaluation of learner's progress and teacher's program. Use contextual support for keywords – pictures/mime – of feelings /opinions: eg. good/not good; like/don't like; happy/not happy; boring/interesting; helpful/not helpful.*
• Can use personal pronouns	• Uses personal pronouns (eg. I/we/ he/she/it/they)	• Use of pictorial support/photos to assist recount is recommended*	
• Can begin to use time markers	• Begins to use time markers – (Yesterday, before, last week)	• Use of article is not mandatory at this level (although teacher would model correct use) *Within familiar activities*	
• Can use prepositions with location	• Uses prepositions with location eg. Yesterday in (the) forest		

* For shared language could construct a photo recount – recount sentences underneath each photo, with accompanying tape – to enhance oral recount. Focus of assessment is on spoken language, but can build the field for Cert I recount

Performance indicators are listed to reveal the minimum performance required for the element concerned
Lit I is the minimum performance required – Lit II are only considered to be possible extensions
Within familiar activities suggests that learner can do this more than once – ie involving a transfer of competency

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Appendix 2: LEARNER PROFILES

Table 1: Learner profiles (on entry to class – ordered chronologically) **From January 1996 – December 1997.**

Students	Age/sex	Time in Australia	Country of origen	Languages Spoken	Occupation		Years of education	Marital status, Family networks in Australia	ASLPR – on entry			
					Own Country	Australia			S	L	R	W
G.1	22 F	3 months	Iran	Kurdish. Turkish	Home duties	unemployed	0	Married, 2	0	0	0	0
H.2	36 F	5 years	Laos	Laotian	Home duties	unemployed	3	Separated,known domestic violence, 4 ch	0	0	0	0
F.3	56 F	3 months	Bosnia	Croatian	Home duties	unemployed	6	War-widow, 4 ch, I grand ch (2 overseas)	0	0	0	0
R.4	54 F	2 months	Bosnia	Croatian	Home duties	unemployed	0	Married, 2 ch	0	0	0	0
C. 5	42 F	3 years	El Salvador	Spanish	Home duties	unemployed	0	Separated, known domestic violence, 3 ch Austr	0+	0+	0	0
S.6	40 F	17 months	Iraq	Assyrian, Arabic	Home duties	pension	3	War-widow, 9 (1 overseas)	0	0	0	0
T.7	41 F	3 months	Iran	Farsi	Home duties	unemployed	0	Married, 4 (1 overseas)	0	0	0	0
A.8*	45 M	3 months	Iran	Farsi	welder	Unemployed	9	Married, 4 (I overseas)	0+	0+	0+	0+
P.9	38 F	2 yr. 6 mths	Hong Kong	Cantonese	unknown	unemployed	5	married	0+	0	0	0
T.23	59 F	16 months	Zimbabwe	Hindi, Katchh	Home duties	————	6-8	Married, 3 ch, grandchildren	1+	1+	1-	0
K.1	60 F	10 months	Kampuchea	Kampuchean, Chinese,	Home duties (factory work NZ 9 years)	unemployed	0	Widow, 1 child, 1 grandch Aust	1+	1+	0+	0+
G.12	49 F	18 months	Afghanistan	Dari	Hairdresser & home duties	unemployed	8	War-Widow, 2 ch	0	0+	0	0+
R.13	22 F	21 months	Kurdistan, Iraq	Kurdish, Arabic	Home duties	pension	2	Married, known domestic violence, 2 ch	0+	0+	0+	0
T.14	60+ F	1 year	Bosnia	Croatian	Restaurant manager-own business	pension	4	War- widow, 2 (1 overseas)	0+	0+	0+	0+
D.15	21 F	6 months	Sudan	Nuba, Arabic	Hairdresser /Craft	pension	2	War-widow, 2 ch, 1 brother	0	0+	0	0
A.16	32 F	9 months	Eritrea	Tigrigna, Amharic, Arabic	teacher	unemployed	5-6	Married, 2 ch,	0+	0+	0	0
S.17	34 F	1 year	Thailand	Thai	Home duties	unemployed	4	Married	0+	0+	0	0

K.18	22 F	5 months	Fiji	Hindi, pidgin English	Home duties	unemployed	8	Separated, 1 sister	1	1+	0	0
A.19	39 F	4 years	Iran	Persian	Home duties	unemployed	9	Married, 3 ch	1	1	0+	0
S.20	26 F	3 months	Thailand	Thai	cook	Cook- own restaurant	3-4	Married, 1 ch overseas	1	1+	0+	0
A.21	29 M	2 years, 10 months	Iraq	Assyrian, Arabic	Factory work	Baker/ pastry cook	9	Single, family unknown	1	1+	0+	0+
K.22	42 F	9 months	Ethiopia	Tigrigna, Amharic, Arabic	Home duties	unemployed	0	Husband missing (political prisoner 15 yrs), 3 ch Aust; I grandchild Aust (ch overseas).	0	0	0	0
T.23	20 F	9 months	Ethiopia	Tigrigna, Amharic, Arabic	Cook, Home duties	pension	0	War-Widow, father missing (political prisoner, 2 brothers, I daughter	0+	0+	0+	0
H.24 **	64 F	1 year	China	Mandarin	Doctor – GP	unemployed	17	married	0+	0+	0+	0+
Y.25	18 M	6 weeks	Eritrea	Tigrigna, Arabic	Welder	unemployed	5	Single, war trauma, sister and sister-in-law (family overseas)	0	0	0	0
G.26	29 F	6 weeks	Eritrea	Tigrigna, Arabic	Home duties	unemployed	4	War-widow, 1 ch, sister & brother (family overseas)	0	0	0	0
W.27	32 F	6 week	Eritrea	Eritrean, Amharic,Arabic	cleaner	unemployed	6	Married, husband	0	0+	0+	0
M.28	36 F	12 months	Iran	Persian, Turkish	Hair dresser	pension	11	Separated, 3 ch	1-	1-	0+	0
Y.29	32 M	6 months	Iran	Farsi Turkish	Restaurant/ mechanic	unemployed	12	Single, previous political prisoner	0+	1-	1-	0+
S.30	43 F	2 yrs, 4 mths	China	Cantonese	farming	unemployed	2	Married, family Australia	0	0	0	0
W.31	66 M	20 months	Hong Kong	Cantonese	Repaired sewing machines	retired	6	Married	0	0	0	0
P.32	61 F	20 months	Hong Kong	Cantonese	Home duties	retired	6	Married	0	0	0	0
J.33	36 M	2 yrs 3 mths	China	Cantonese	Driver -automobile	unemployed	10	Married, 2 ch	0+	0+	0+	0+

* A.8 did literacy focus in learning centre (see Table II Appendix)
**H.24 : was placed in class for short time, due to her high anxiety in other beginner classes and her age, and no other situation was suitable at that stage. No samples have been used from her in the findings section.

Appendix 3

Table II: Pathways and Progress

KEY: shading for reading and writing comps, **GE** means General English

Student & lang/s spoken	Age/sex	Years of education	Hours attended in literacy class & entry to AMEP	CSWE competencies achieved	After literacy class
G. 1 Kurdish, Turkish	22 F	0	50 hrs - at start of program-	———	Moved to Melbourne after 50 hrs
H.2 Laotian	36 F	3	150 hours (1x 50, 1x 100) ... no previous AMEP program - CES funded (exemption)	1,2,	Moved to a nearby city & travelled 4 hours to attend class (round trip) No further class given .
F.3 Croatian/ some Turkish	56 F	6	150 hours- at start of program (1 x 50 hrs, 1x 100hrs)	Many Cert I competencies: 1,2,3,4,5,6, **7,8,9,11,13**	Went to term 1 of slow paced Cert I class (completed extra 300 hrs); then chose to learn English at craft group/community centre - stated class after literacy was "more of the same" and wasn't learning new things - although completing written competencies, etc.
R.4 Croatian	54 F	0	200 hrs - at start of program (2x 100 hrs)	Some Cert I competencies: 1,2,4,5, **7,9,11**	Went to term 1 slow paced Cert I class & completed 2 terms (2x150 hrs); receiving teacher noted her confidence and
C.5 Spanish	42 F	0	150 hrs - after enrolled in 500 hrs of GE AMEP	Some Cert I comps: 1,2,3,4,5, **7,8,9,11**	Went to large GE/Literacy class with many repeaters (in CES funded class) but withdrew; went to another class at a different
S.6 Assyrian &, Arabic	40 F	3	320 hours - - at start of program (2x 100 hrs, 1x120)	Most Cert I comps: 1,2,3,4,5,6, **7,9,10,11,12**	Went to term 1 slow paced Cert I for one term (150 hrs), left for children - then 4 mths later for one more term Cert 1 (approx.90hrs)
T.7 Farsi	41 F	0	200 hours (2x100) at start of program	Some Cert I competencies: 1,2,4,5, **7,9,11**	Attended Cert I slow-paced class and completed 2 terms (2x 150 hrs) & returned 14 mths later for final term of GE. Learner A.8 requested wife recommence in literacy class after first moved to Cert 1 slow-paced as "no talking - (too much)writing" but for logistic reasons was not possible. One year later T.7 had retained English - one of better students in group according to GE teacher.
A.8 Farsi	45 M	9	After 2 terms (300 hrs) of GE, 40 hrs approx. of 'literacy' in learning centre - follow-up tapes/materials); also taught by teacher-researchers in GE/Literacy.(requested to attend 'the l iteracy' class after this - but at that stage funding was for women (also wife was in class)	Completed all required for Cert I: 1,2,3,4,5,6, **7,8,9,10,11,12**	2x 150 hrs GE, 1x 150 hrs literacy/GE, 1X90 hrs GE
P.9 Cantonese	F**	5	although her profile indicated she may have difficulty, after 20 hrs of full attendance was "rearing to go" and was reported by receiving teacher as being one of the best in the "slow-paced" GE class - had confidence and risk-taking behaviour - approaches used may have given her a temporary 'head start'	Cert I competencies were not available; Cert II: comps 3 & 8	Did not return after minimal attendance in slow-paced Cert I - 18 hours ; 2 short terms completed at another centre (102 hours total)

Student & lang/s spoken	Age/sex	Years of education	Hours attended in literacy class & entry to AMEP	CSWE competencies achieved	After literacy class
T.10 Hindi, 'Katch'	59 F	6-8	100 hours of literacy, after 4 short terms of GE in Melbourne (over 5 months)	Completed all required for Cert I: 1,2,3,4,5,6, 7,8,9,10,11,12	Went to another term of GE (123 hours over 2 months) then one term (2 months) at another centre.
K.11 Kampuchean, Chinese,	60 F	0	2 terms (2 x 100 hrs) at start of program -was referred by teacher in first lessons	Most cert I comps: 1,2,3,4,5,6, 7,9,11,13 (also completed 12- recount, not recorded)	Went to 2nd term of slow paced Cert I - did one term only (only attended half of time); moving to Sydney for 2 yrs - no further activity recorded
G.12 Dari	49 F	8	This student took longest to complete Followed more traditional expectations re. length of time required (over 4 years including last year with home tutor (& class). Initially learnt 1:1 over a year - was not placed into GE program for social contact.	Completed Cert 1 1,2,3,4,5,6, 7,8,9,10,11,12,13	See comments AMEP hours (510++)
R.13 Kurdish, Arabic	22 F	2	After 2 terms (300 hrs) in GE had 2 terms in literacy (1x100, 2x120hrs) only attended for last 2 terms due to domestic violence/health	Most Cert I competencies: 1,2,3,4,5,6, 7,8,9,10,11,13	Went to 2nd term of GE Cert I- teacher reported felt 'repressed in class of non-speakers.; then moved to Sydney
T.14 Croatian	60+ F	4	after 300 hrs (2x 150) in GE had 100 hours (1 term), or 2 terms	Most Cert I competencies: 1,2,3,4,5,6, 7,8,9,10,11	Learnt English at craft group/community centre
D.15 Nuba, Arabic	21 F	2	At start of AMEP program was enrolled in literacy for 4 terms (approx. 400 hrs- 413)	Completed Certif. I: 1,2,3,4,5,6, 7,8,9,10,11,12,13	After literacy class went to 2nd term of slow-paced Cert I (for 120 hrs) then another term of Cert I at another centre (120 hrs). Was enrolled term 1 98 in CSWE 1 for JPS classes (150 hrs) - (may have completed comps 12 & 13 here? - or may have finished in AMEP - as was never awarded Certificate!).
A.16 Tigrigna, Amharic, Arabic	32 F	5-6	At start of AMEP program was enrolled in literacy for 4 terms, but due to illness of self and baby attended regularly over final 3 terms (360 hrs total) (was referred by teacher as oracy higher than others in term 1, Cert 1 class).	Completed Certif I: 1,2,3,4,5,6, 7,8,9,10,11,12,13	After literacy went to 2nd term slow paced Cert I class for 1 term (120 hrs) then additional 110 hrs of AMEP (1x 80 hrs + 1 x 30 hrs) part-time over a 5 month period. (Had teacher M teaching her for 30 of the 80 hrs) Due to needing to pay for childcare after AMEP hours entitlement, discontinued classes 30 hrs into final term.
S.17 Thai	34 F	4	After 2 x 150 hr GE courses commenced 2 terms (2x120) of literacy. After AMEP hrs was enrolled in JPS classes where continued with English (340 hrs) and was considered to work well and improve (also home tutor once a week after finished literacy) *comps 10 & 12 seem to have been completed after AMEP hrs.	Completed Certif I: 1,2,3,4,5,6, 7,8,9,10*,11,12* (Comp 13 not recorded a lthough student passed in AMEP (have sample)	Went to 2nd term of a slow-paced Cert I GE for 120 hrs one of the teachers especially had worked with D & M and was (aware of the issues re text/print etc). Husband was concerned with the relevance/usefulness of some of the topics/tasks in GE class.

Student & lang/s spoken	Age/sex	Years of education	Hours attended in literacy class & entry to AMEP	CSWE competencies achieved	After literacy class
K.18 Hindi/ some English	22 F	8	At start of program did 2 terms (2x120 hrs),	Most Cer. I : 1,2,3,4,5,6, **7,8,9,10** Many Cert II: 1,2,3,5,6, **7,10,12,13,14*** competency good at - letter - didn't do	Went to integrated Certi & II class
A.19 Persian	39 F	9	1 term of literacy (120 hrs) at start of AMEP program	Completed Cert I: (after 400 hrs): 1,2,3,4,5,6, **7,8,9,10,11,12** Completed some of Cert II iin remainder of hrs and after AMEP: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8, **9,10,11,12,13**	Due to ill-health enrolled 5 mths after finished literacy class in slow paced Cert I for 2 terms (2x150 hrs), then deferred again (after another 30 hrs) for 4 months, then another 50 hrs of AMEP to finish hours. After this attended JPS classes regularly for 2 terms (150 hrs total)
S.20 Thai	26 F	3-4	one term of literacy (120 hrs) at start of AMEP hours	Cert I comps: 1,2,4,5,6, **7,9,11**	Attended for 3 weeks in another GE/literacy group. Then no further classes due to maternity - and working in own restaurant
A.21 Assyrian & Arabic	29 M	9	Commenced GE classes almost 3 years earlier for 6 months (140 hrs completed); returned 2 yrs later for 1 term GE (attended 66 hrs - part-time job); attended literacy for 1 day per week over 1 term (total 36 hrs)	Most Cert I comps, especially writing: 2,3,4,5,6, **7,8,9,11,12,13** (form-filling was not attempted formally, although could do by end of literacy)	After 1 term of literacy returned for more - nature of class had changed and didn't seem to suit need any more (different setup- he was in higher oracy group due to "streaming", different teacher/no tutors, much smaller group with largely women... and only attended once or twice..)
K.22 Tigrigna, Amharic, Arabic	42 F	0	Started literacy course at commencement of AMEP hrs (4 terms x 120 hrs)	Cert I comps: 1,2,3,4,5, **7,9,11**	After literacy class went to a slow paced GE/literacy class (20 + students); teacher commented that could keep up and understood procedures; then tried a CES funded course - but teacher commented didn't attend (another big class); home tutor one year later (from L1 literacy program)
T.23 Tigrigna, Amharic, Arabic	20 F	0	Started literacy class half-way through term 2 of GE class (after 150 hrs)(asked to sit in part-time on some classes); another 3 terms literacy (3x 120 hrs) + one more term of literacy/ESL (100 hrs approx.)	Completed Cert I: 1,2,3,4,5,6, **7,8,9,10,11,12,13** (in AMEP hrs) some Cert II comps: 1,2,4,5,7,8,11 (outside AMEP hrs)	After literacy class was integrated in GE/Literacy group with a lot of "repeaters" - D took class and used same approaches, which assisted with integration. After AMEP so smooth change-over (CSWE 11 undertaken after AMEP hours (over following year -340hrs)
H. 24* Mandarin	64 F	17	Placed in literacy class and stayed for 63 hrs. Had previously done 117 hours of GE course at Cert 1 slow-paced; 3 months later was placed in 2 other Cert 1 classes but not understanding, so transferred to literacy - confidence building, etc. [Husband was surprised class was considered 'slowest' in centre	Comp 3, Certif. I	Stayed for _ term then moved outside Brisbane city area (thus didn't attempt certificate). No further activity. Enjoyed class and regular attendance- also provided bilingual volunteer tutor. She recognised she didn't have oral proficiency of many others - and needed a lot of reference to written text, which was provided for her.

Student & lang/s spoken	Age/sex	Years of education	Hours attended in literacy class & entry to AMEP	CSWE competencies achieved	After literacy class
Y.25 Tigrigna, Arabic	18 M	5	At start of program - 3 terms (3x 120 hrs)	Cert I comps: 1,2,3,4,5,6, **7,9,11**	Went to another slow-paced class (20+) for 2 terms (1x150 + 1x 90); health trauma (hospitalised during 2nd term) & despondency.
G.26 Tigrigna, Arabic	29 F	4	At start of program - 3 terms (3x 120 hrs)	Many Cert I comps: 1,2,3,4,5,6, **7,9,11**	Went to another slow-paced class (20+) for 2 terms (1x150 + 1x 90); seemed to be influenced by different attitudes towards what & how she should be learning English
W.27 Eritrean, Amharic, Arabic	32 F	6	1 _ terms literacy (1x120 hrs; 1x30 hrs) at start of AMEP program	Completed Certif. I: 1,2,3,4,5,6, **7,8,9,10,11,12,13**	After literacy went to slow-paced Cert I for remainder _ of term (110 hrs), with D who used same kinds of approaches- a lot of "repeaters", then 2 more terms Crete 1 (1x150, 1x100), with different teachers.
M.28 Persian, Turkish	36 F	11	1 term (120 hrs) of literacy, after 1 term (150 hrs) of GE	Cert I comps: 1,2,3,4,5,6, **7** Cert II comps: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8, **9,10,12,13,14**	Went into an integrated Cert I & II class for another 2 x 150 hrs; also home tutor for 1 term after left literacy class
Y.29 Farsi Turkish	32 M	12	1 term (120 hrs) literacy after 2 1/2 terms of GE (1x 70 hrs, 2x 150hrs) Part-time restaurant work commenced around time of a second (different) literacy class; choose to do other pathways outlined, as not many students & all women.	Completed Cert I: 1,2,3,4,5,6, **7,8,9,10,11,12** many Cert II comps: 1,2,6,7, **10,12,13,14**	After 1 term of literacy went to another slow- paced Cert I class (part-time)with a lot of 'repeaters" & part-time evening class (with same teacher D who used same approaches- approx. 100 hrs); then followed up with 2 part time terms Cert II (approx 180 hrs)
S.30 Cantonese	43 F	2	3terms literacy at start of program (3x 120 hrs).. was initially transferred for logistical reasons after one term, but seen to be not coping with receiving class so returned to literacy.	Many Cert I comps: 1,2,3,4,5,6, **7,9,11**	Was transferred to Cert I slow-paced class for logistical reasons, after 3 terms of literacy -did not continue with new class.
W.31 Cantonese	66 M	6	3 terms of literacy at start of program (3x 3 terms literacy at start of program (3x 120 hrs).. was initially transferred for logistical reasons after one term ..student requested to come back, as seen to be not coping well with class.	Many Cert I comps: 1,2,3,4,5, **7,9,10,11**	Went to slow-paced Cert I after 3 terms of literacy - did one term (111 hrs)
P.32 Cantonese	61 F	6	3 terms literacy at start of program (3x 120 hrs).. was initially transferred for logistical reasons after one term, but seen to be not coping well with receiving class	Many Cert I comps: 1,2,3,4,5,6, **7,9,11**	Went to slow-paced Cert I after 3 terms of literacy - did one term (111 hrs)
J.33 Cantonese	36 M	10	1 term (120 hrs) after 2 terms (240 hrs)of GE -(1x90, 1x150)	Comps Cert I: 1,2,3,4,5,6, **7,9,10,11**	Went to another Cert I slow paced class for one term (150 hrs) (big class - 20+)

Chapter

4

Examining the accounts of homeless people's needs to determine a role for language, literacy and numeracy training

Geraldine Castleton, Rosemary Jewell, Letitia Whitmore and Marya McDonald

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Introduction

This project set out to respond to that part of the National Collaborative Adult English Language and Literacy Strategy (NCAELLS, 1993) that calls for Commonwealth and State governments, industry and the community sector to work together to provide programs for people with identifiable language literacy and numeracy needs so that they can achieve personal, educational and employment-related goals.

It focused on examining various accounts of the nature of the language, literacy and numeracy needs of homeless people, specifically those who are clients of a particular service agency. This organisation is based in an area that has been identified as currently lacking any appropriate adult language and literacy provision. The agency in question has determined that it has clients with specific language, literacy and numeracy needs.

The Centre

The 139 Club has been operating for twenty-two years, the last ten years from its current premises. It aims "to provide a better qualify of life for homeless, destitute and socially isolated people, within their own framework. While self-reliance and participation is strongly encouraged, clients are accepted and supported unconditionally" (139 Club Inc, 1997). A strong emphasis is placed on social networking to expand clients' horizons,

minimise social isolation and improve self-esteem by providing support, contacts and avenues for change leading to improved quality of life and relationships with the wider community.

Situated in the inner-north Brisbane area, the 139 Club is open between 8.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m., Monday to Friday and offers a range of services including the provision of meals for a small fee; showering and washing facilities; mail distribution; first aid/health services; emergency housing; counselling, and the distribution of financial and material support. The Club offers a limited service on Sundays, with lunch provided be a group of volunteers, free of charge. Clients attending the Club are generally from Fortitude Valley with some clients drawn from New Farm, and adjacent areas.

The Club provides a safe and stable, non-denominational, non-political and non-racial environment with a wholistic approach to meeting their clients' needs on physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual and social levels. Consequently, the Club is anxious to respond, in appropriate ways, to what it perceives to be real language, literacy and numeracy needs of many of its clients.

Conduct of the project

Who are the homeless?

In writing about homelessness within the city of Toronto in Canada, Trumpener (1997, Sec 1:7) has noted that definitions of this phenomena need to be broad enough to reflect the reality of contemporary urban life, and from this perspective, described it as including "people who are homeless, transient, staying in emergency shelters, or underhoused in substandard apartments and rooming houses". She then went on to note that "[p]eople who are homeless also tend to be living in extreme poverty and excluded from opportunities for employment, education, recreation and social contact". Noting the many ways in which the conditions of homelessness in Toronto reflect circumstances for homeless people in Brisbane, and, no doubt, many other cities around the world, this project has adopted Trumpener's (1997) definition of homelessness.

What is language, literacy and numeracy?

The meanings of the terms 'language', 'literacy' and 'numeracy' are highly contested within political, economic and educational circles. This report acknowledges the various ways of conceptualising language as text, as social process and as social practice, and also similarly different conceptualisations of numeracy. For the purposes of this project the term 'language' will refer to the requirements for language education for adult Australians for whom English may be a second, or additional language, and, from this perspective, will be included within wider conceptualisations of 'literacy' that will also incorporate notions of numeracy as social practice.

Literacy is therefore recognised as a relative, and socially-contingent practice, and interpreted to be what people need, or want to do, often in interaction with other people, to be able to go about their daily lives. This conceptualisation encompasses notions of literacy as not just skills, but rather as "value defined practice[s] within a cultural context (which must be defined) from community to community and not across the nation" (Cope at al, 1995:16 in McNaught et al, 1996:3). From this perspective literacy can be viewed as a communal resource, utilised by family, community groups as well as by individuals (Barton & Hamilton, 1998:5), and as incorporating LoBianco and Freebody's (1997:26) contention that "literacy is ... for acting on and in the world".

In Gee's (1990) terms, literacy is "firmly located within a Discourse-centred frame" (Prinsloo & Breier, 1996:22), with discourse being described as:

> *composed of ways of talking, listening, reading, writing, acting, interacting, believing, valuing, and using tools or objects, in particular settings and at specific times, so as to display or to recognise a particular social identity.* (Gee in Gee et al, 1996:10)

Gee's (1990:142) notion of Discourse conceptualises it as always more than just language, rather more as a sort of 'identity kit'. His conceptualisation also includes ways of distinguishing between primary and secondary Discourses. According to Gee (1990), membership of a primary Discourse is achieved without conscious effort as we are admitted to, and socialise within, the 'family' (as this is defined within a given culture) and other initially acculturating groups. On the other hand, membership of secondary Discourses of key institutions beyond the home such as schools, the workplace, churches, bureaucracies and official offices, has to be learned, and must involve the development of a meta-knowledge concerning ways of valuing, believing, thinking and enacting social practice.

Conceptualising discourses as "systems of meanings embedded in certain institutions, that in turn are determined by ideologies 'in response to larger social structures' " (Kress, 1985, quoted in Pennycook, 1994:124), underlies the significance of connections Foucault (1980:100) makes between discourse, knowledge and power. At a personal level, being literate becomes having "mastery of, or fluent control over, a secondary Discourse" (Gee, 1990:153), and as literacy is "always the shaped product of interested social action"' (Prinsloo & Breier, 1996:22), it is also essentially plural, reflecting various forms, motives and actions of participants involved in any social interaction. At a societal level, the key social discourses that "shape identity or 'personhood' in society" (Prinsloo & Breier, 1996:22), emanate from the powerful social institutions mentioned above.

Within official discourses on literacy in Australia, found in various reports and documents emanating from governments and other sources, literacy is essentially framed as a functional, employment-related skill, while people who are deemed to have low literacy skills are construed as being 'deficient'. From this perspective, then, they may be held accountable for a range of social ills, including the nation's difficulty in trading competitively in the international marketplace (Castleton, 1997).

How is literacy need defined?

Just as definitions of literacy must capture the dynamic nature of literacy practices, so too must descriptions of literacy need be viewed as a changing continuum, "with the variability over the stages of a person's life. ... Such needs are not constant, but may arise at different intervals, and in different intensities and forms in work and in community or family life" (McNaught, Candlin, Plimer and Pugh, 1996:3-4), reflecting its role as a communal resource.

A number of reports over recent years have dealt with the difficulty of distinguishing between the concepts of "need" and "demand" for literacy training. The MODELL for Remote Areas Report (Castleton, Schiffmann and Richards, 1995), that examined the need for adult English language, literacy and numeracy training in remote areas of Queensland, for example, identified high levels for such need across the state and across various groups in the community. However, in no area did the demand for such training match what may be described as the perceived need.

The situation can be further complicated when distinctions are drawn between the terms 'need', 'unmet need' and 'demand': do the latter terms mean one and the same, for example? Interpretations of these concepts will differ according to *who* is doing the asking, *how* the questions are asked, for what purpose is the information being collected and *what* stakeholders are involved in the process, illustrating Foucault's (1976, 1980) claims that

knowledge can be traced to different discourse practices that enclose the knowledge formulated from within them.

For the purpose of this study, the following distinctions of need, devised by McNaught and colleagues (1996:4), have been adopted:

apparent estimated from quantitative data sources including population statistics from census data, extrapolations from government department data bases and large-scale research surveys;

perceived interpreted by service delivery agents, researchers, community welfare officers and interested/informed stakeholders, usually qualitative in nature;

expressed typically obtained from clients or from people with direct access to clients.

According to these distinctions, 'demand' is best understood as 'expressed need', however it is worth noting that there can be considerable overlap across these different categories of data.

Client groups serviced by the target organisation

It would be doing a grave injustice to both the organisation and the people it serves to try to describe the centre's clients as a homogeneous group of socially disadvantaged people, other than to note that people use the 139 Club because of pressing need, either short or long-term. Many of the groups found within the community that have frequently been categorised in various reports [e.g. *Come in Cinderella*, 1991; *Pathways to Quality*, 1991; *Enhancing Participation in Adult Literacy Programs*, 1992; *The Integration of Regional Adult Literacy Service Infrastructure with Adult Literacy Teacher Education and Training*, 1993; *Adult English Language and Literacy Provision by the Community Based Education Sector*, 1993; *The Modell for Remote Areas Report*, 1995; *Unmet need and Unmet demand for Adult English Language and Literacy Services*, 1996; *Youth employment: A working solution*, 1997] as "disadvantaged" and in need of adult literacy services, are represented within the 139 Club's client base. These groups include:

- people of non-English speaking background;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people;
- unemployed, particularly men;
- youth;
- intellectually and physically disabled;
- women (though in limited numbers).

With respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, these clients of the 139 Club may best be described as fitting within the category of 'Urban' as determined by the National Aboriginal Education Committee (1984) and used by Nagi Binanga, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Standing Committee for Vocational Education, Training and Employment in Queensland (1995). While the writers of the Nagi Binanga Strategic Plan (1995:28) have acknowledged that it is neither favourable nor good practice to attempt to place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into specific groups, they do concede some benefit from applying the descriptions used by the National Aboriginal Education Committee to describe Indigenous groups according to their geographic location. According to these terms, the designation 'Urban' is used to describe Indigenous people who are highly geographically and economically embedded in non-Indigenous society, but, because of the mainstream community, may experience considerable social separation (*Nagi Binanga*, 1995:29). Many of these people may also continue to participate in traditional practices.

Methodology and Procedures employed in the project

The project utilised a variety of data sources for analysis. These included:

- relevant literature including reports and documents;
- relevant documentation and statistics kept by the centre;
- statistical data from government agencies;
- focus group sessions with staff from the centre and other informants;
- face-to-face interviews with a range of informants representing staff of the centre; other provider organisations in the target area; community groups and individuals as well as clients of the centre. Field notes were kept of all focus groups and interviews, and selected interviews were taped for closer analysis.

An interview protocol was developed to be used with focus groups and individual interviewees (Appendix 1). It was not intended that the sequence of the questions be adhered to rigidly, nor that they be addressed in the order they were presented, rather they were meant to signal aspects of the topic that were to be covered. In the course of the interviews and focus group sessions, the researchers noted if questions had not been addressed and directed the participants' attention to these topics when appropriate. In that respect, the sessions were semi-structured. The intention of the interview schedule was to ensure that the interviewees talked generally about the topic under research.

The various forms of data were then reviewed and subjected to a systematic analysis and manual coding to identify recurring themes and emerging patterns. In addition, the taped interviews and focus group sessions were analysed using techniques from applied ethnomethodology to determine if the themes emerging from the first stage of analysis were confirmed or dis-confirmed in the talk of key informants to the project. Interpretive procedures derived from the ethnomethodological study of talk have been employed for the purpose of detailing and understanding participants' accounts of the relationships between 'homelessness' and 'literacy'.

Following Silverman (1993), and working within a framework employed by Freebody and colleagues (1995, Vol 1:93-94) and Castleton (1997:204) the interview and focus group data was systematically interrogated to determine:

- What *categories of people* are established in and by the talk?

  What kinds of people are there "in this topic" such that the talk can be made sensible?

  What contrasts are set up in the talk - what are the "standard relational pairs" provided and are these relational categories stated or left implicit in the talk?

  What *predicates are attached* to these categories in and by the talk?

- What are the *cause-effects* accounts that are enabled by these category-attribute connections? That is, given that the speaker has set up the important ways of categorising the people implicated in the talk, and attached certain attributes to these categories of people (explicitly or otherwise) what kinds of explanations of social activity are permitted or made inevitable by and from that process?

- What *substantiation procedures*, or what Heritage (1984:154) calls "aspects of context" are used by the speaker to support the category-attribute account connection?. e.g.

  shared understandings - in that the speaker takes it as commonly understood and accepted that their accounting procedures are self-evident ("everybody knows that ...");

  anecdotal evidence - in that stories from the past are presented as iconic narratives that support the account;

official discourses - in that research or policy documents, or media accounts are presented as substantiation;

personal or **professional experience** is drawn upon to support a generalisation.

These interpretive procedures draw attention to the categories of listener built into the talk and the positioning of the hearer with respect to the speaker: the project proceeded to document how certain attributes, knowledge and assumptions are attached, often by implication, to categories of people and how these attributes, knowledge and assumptions open certain avenues for understanding and practice, in this case with respect to 'homelessness' and 'literacy'.

Findings and discussions

Establishing Apparent Need

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data (1996) and information taken from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Aspects of Literacy Assessed Skill Levels, Australia 1996 (1997) have been used to provide macro data on levels of language, literacy and numeracy need in the target area. It should be noted, however, that the figures obtained from these sources are generally more constructed than derived from any direct expression of need by respondents.

Numerous reports, including *No Single Measure* (1989), a predecessor to the 1996 ABS Survey of Aspects of Literacy (1997), have established links between factors such as birthplace, English spoken language proficiency, years of education, highest qualification gained and low levels of literacy, and so the responses to these Census questions, along with standard biographical data such as age and gender can be transformed into proxy indicators of need for the population aged 15 years or more (McNaught et al, 1996:23).

While offering a cautionary note on the use of this form of data, McNaught and colleagues (1996) do argue that language need can be approximately measured by analysing those born in non-English speaking countries and those born in Australia of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background, whose self-reported English proficiency is 'not well' or 'not at all'. The ABS has confirmed that these indicators are consistent with a spoken proficiency of less than ASLPR 2, noting, however, that individuals who overrate their proficiency and those whose oral proficiency may be self-assessed as "well" but whose reading and writing proficiency is low, may not be included, even though these people may also be potential adult literacy clients (McNaught, Candlin, Plimer and Pugh, 1996:23).

As pointed out by McNaught and colleagues (1996:23), adult literacy need is more difficult to determine, even in macro terms:

> *On the broad assumption that if the respondent did not ever go to school or left school before reaching the age of 14 years, we may surmise that their literacy skills would be inadequate for most social and vocational tasks, particularly as literacy demands are becoming more complex. However, this ignores two groups - those who left school one or two years later but may still express demand for literacy courses and those who may have left school early, but later in life attained a skilled vocational qualification which required gaining a higher level of literacy competence.*

Acknowledging these cautionary notes, the following information about the Fortitude Valley area can be gained from the 1996 Population Census:

Birthplace distribution

Analysis of data on birthplace distribution of the Fortitude Valley area shows the following features:

- 12% are born overseas and come from countries of English speaking backgrounds.
- 18.34% are born overseas in countries where English is not the first language. Within the wider Australian population, the proportion of persons from non-English Speaking Background is 13.5%.
- almost 3 out of every hundred persons (2.83%) are Aboriginal, which is above the overall Australian figure of 1.79%.
- 0.48% are Torres Strait Islanders, while the overall proportion of the Australian population is 0.16%.

English language proficiency

In the Fortitude Valley area, 20.81% of respondents to the 1996 Census stated that they spoke a language other than English at home. With regard to self-reported English proficiency, the 1996 Census figures show that for those persons who speak other languages, 22% reported speaking English 'not well' and 11.27% 'not at all'. These figures are significantly higher than the overall Australian figures which are 19% for 'not well' and 3.76% for 'not at all'.

Age distribution

On census night in 1996, the inner Brisbane area of Fortitude Valley had a population of 1591 persons (excluding overseas visitors) aged 15 years and over. Of this group 55.75% were males and 46.25% were females. Further analysis reveals that 20.7% of the area's adult population were 65 years and older. This group is followed by the 20 - 24 years age group (12.2%); the 25 - 29 years age group (10.9%), and the 50 - 54 years age group (10.2%). In all of these groups males make up the majority.

Educational background

Of the responses from those persons aged 15 years and over to the question regarding age of leaving school, 18.7% claimed they left school at age 14 or younger, while 1.6% (25 people) noted that they never attended school. These figures are higher than the national figures of 13.57% and 0.71% respectively. Over four out of every ten persons (44%) in this area claim they have a post-compulsory qualification, so the majority of the persons (56%) do not have any such qualifications.

Employment status

The overall unemployment rate for the full Fortitude Valley area is about 16.5%. Those in the 15 - 19 years age group experience the highest proportion of unemployment at 27.7%. This group is followed by the 45 - 54 years age group (19.8%) and the 55 - 64 years age group (18%). However, closer analysis shows a much higher rate of unemployment for all age groups within the inner Fortitude Valley area. Here, around half of both the 15 - 19 year olds and 55 - 64 year age groups are unemployed, whilst the remaining age groups experience between one quarter and one third unemployment status.

Household relationship trends

Of the residents aged 15 years and over within the full Fortitude Valley area, 72.2% stated that they did not live with their own families. They either lived in an unrelated family household (2.1%), as a group household member (17.8%), as a lone person (24.5%), or within a non-applicable category (55.3%) which comprises persons in 'non-classified households', 'non-private dwelling', or 'off shore collection districts'. More than one quarter (25.9%) of this 'non-applicable' category is composed of persons aged 75 years and over.

Adult Literacy - Assessed Skill Levels (1996)

As part of its population census of 1996, the Australian Bureau of Statistics undertook a Survey of Aspects of Literacy (SAL) in order to:

- identify 'at risk' groups with low literacy and numeracy skills;
- help evaluate literacy and numeracy assistance programs;
- identify barriers to individuals achieving skill levels sufficient for daily life and work; and
- provide statistical support for planning and decision making.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Survey of Aspects of Literacy (SAL):

> *did not define literacy in terms of a basic threshold, above which someone is 'literate' and below which someone is 'illiterate'. Rather it defined literacy as a continuum for each of the three types of literacy. ... Progression along this continuum was characterised by increased ability to 'process' information (for example to locate, integrate, match and generate information) and to draw correct inferences based on the information being used* (ABS, 1997:x).

The SAL surveyed people aged 15 - 74 across Australia and involved around nine and a half thousand participants. It objectively assessed three types of literacy proficiency - prose literacy, document literacy and quantitative literacy - acknowledging those skills necessary to understand and use information from material which is printed in English and found in everyday life. For analytic purposes, the scores on the continuum for each of the three types of literacy were divided into five levels - Level 1 (lowest) to Level 5 (highest).

Findings of the SAL

The results of the SAL indicate that almost half of Australians aged 15 to 74 have 'poor' or 'very poor' literacy skills across the three domains. Another 35% could be expected to cope with many of the demands of daily life, but not always at a high level of proficiency.

Further results show that almost half of the people who first spoke a language other than English are at Level 1, while 14% of native speakers are also at Level 1. These results, as well as the finding that 30% of unemployed people have Level 1 skills, have significant implications for this project.

However, an important point identified in much of the literature produced to date, and strongly reinforced by the findings of the SAL, is the interrelatedness of a range of factors that need to be considered in determining the status of literacy skill among particular groups within the community.

Literacy and first language

Compared with people whose first language is English, large proportions of people who first spoke a language other than English were at the lowest skill level on each of the three literacy scales. Almost half of the people who first spoke a language other than English are at Level 1. Of those people whose first language was not English, the proportion at level 1 increased significantly with age.

Some 45% of unemployed people whose first language was not English were at Level 1 on the prose scale compared with 26% of unemployed people whose first language was English. Almost half (48%) of the people not in the labour force who spoke a language other than English were aged 55 - 74.

Educational attainment of Level 1 and 2 people

The SAL shows that there is a strong relationship between educational attainment and literacy skills, though it is noted that there are exceptions to this connection, with some people with little formal education performing at a high literacy skill level, and conversely, an extensive education does not guarantee a high level literacy skill (ABS, 1997:16). Generally, the SAL results show that people at levels 1 and 2 tended to have less schooling than people at Levels 3 and 4/5.

Labour force status

The analysis of the SAL showed a clear relationship between literacy skill level and labour force status. The proportion of those people not in the labour force at level 1 (35%) was almost three times that of employed people at the same level (12%). Furthermore, the SAL findings show that people at Level 1 across all three domains represent only 6% of the population receiving an annual income in the highest quintile (ABS, 1997:7), reinforcing the connection between low literacy and low socio-economic status.

Age and Gender

According to the SAL results, the proportion of people at Levels 1 and 2 is generally increased within ascending age groups. Hence it was revealed that older people usually have poorer skills than do younger people: three quarters of those aged 65 - 74 have level 1 or 2 skills. It is noted that this fact may be accounted for by the greater proportion of older people with lower educational attainment levels and their general positioning outside of the labour force.

Additionally, it is important to note that the findings reveal that 45% of the 15 to 19 year olds were at levels 1 and 2. This may partly be explained by the fact that, because some are still at school and lacking any work experience, their opportunity to develop higher level literacy skills may have been restricted. However, when this figure is coupled with the finding that a larger proportion of unemployed people in this age bracket are at Levels 1 and 2 than at Level 4/5, and with known high levels of unemployment among young people, there is cause for concern about this particular age group.

The findings for different performance levels according to gender are said to reflect, to some extent, traditional differences in the fields of study of males and females (ABS, 1997:7). Females tended to be better at prose literacy tasks, while males did better at quantitative literacy tasks, though this actuality was not borne out for the older age group where more males performed at the highest level across all three domains than their female counterparts.

Further findings of the SAL

There has been concern expressed by various groups representing Indigenous people that figures supplied about the literacy skill levels of Indigenous people are, at best, misleading. The ABS acknowledge, that while the SAL yielded some estimates for people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin, these figures may not be useful. Indigenous people living in remote and isolated parts of the country, somewhere around one-quarter of the Indigenous population, were excluded from the survey. Therefore any claims made about literacy levels among Indigenous peoples must be problematic. However, the finding that

some 62% of Indigenous peoples did not complete the highest level of secondary school, compared with 36% of people whose first language was English, gives cause for concern, and highlights the possible need for English language, literacy and numeracy provision for Indigenous people.

Apparent need established

A reading of official census data, and of the recent official survey of aspects of literacy conducted by the ABS, establishes a clear case of apparent need for literacy training for the various groups that make up the client base of the 139 Club. These categories of people are typically attributed with low levels of literacy that are explained through a mix of cultural factors such as ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status and schooling experiences. Throughout these official discourses the people categorised with low literacy skill can be contrasted with those with higher levels of literacy who, in consequence, enjoy better levels of education, social status and employment. An implication that can be drawn from these discourses is that education and training, particularly literacy training, can be seen as a solution, at least in part, to the problems faced by certain groups of people.

This assertion is supported by the National Strategy of the Australian National Training Authority, *Towards a Skilled Australia* (1995). This document identifies access for all Australians as an essential principle of vocational education and training, and calls for a system that provides clients with a range of choices within that system. The Australian National Training Authority recognises that particular groups of people may be under-represented in the VET sector because of individual factors including limited skills in English language, literacy and numeracy, membership of a specific group, geographic and/or social isolation, or a combination of these. There is no discussion, however, on why people take up vocational education and training, rather just a stated need for this to occur. This need is clearly located in widely-held economic rationalist discourses on national productivity and prosperity. Again, the various groups that make up the client base of the 139 Club, are included within ANTA's categorisation of 'under-represented' groups.

Establishing perceived need

Official recognition of concern for levels of literacy among Australia's adult population, that has grown since the late 1980s, has resulted in a plethora of reports that restate the case made by the official data: there is a clearly-made case of literacy need among certain groups of adults within Australian society.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, for example, are found to be three times less likely to have formal qualifications that other Australians, and hence reduced job opportunities (ANTA, 1995). The Nagi Binanga Strategic Plan (1995) stems from a number of concerns, including the poor representation of Indigenous people in existing vocational education and training programs, from the high unemployment rate among Indigenous people, particularly youth, and from the recognition that adult English language literacy and numeracy training is a necessity for many Indigenous people.

The study conducted by the Boarding House Action Group (*The inner city squeeze*, 1997), that covered the inner-Brisbane area including Fortitude Valley and inner New Farm, found that eight percent of boarding house residents were Indigenous people, identifying a significant presence of Indigenous people within the 139 Club's catchment area. The Ecumenical Coffee Brigade (ECB) Project (Coleman, 1997:9), that set out to determine the nature and needs of the ECB's client base, found that Indigenous people are over-represented among homeless people. At the time of the project, Murri people made up 40%

of people who were 'sleeping out' on a regular basis.

Data collected from the 139 Club shows that Indigenous people make up a significant proportion of its client base. These clients typically access the Club to have a meal, take a shower, get rest, seek help in completing official forms, and make contact with friends and family members.

People with disabilities

McNaught and associates (1996) endorsed the findings of an earlier study by van Kraayenoord (1992) that the language, literacy and numeracy needs of adults with intellectual disabilities have received little attention, as has the area of training for people with disabilities generally. A further indication of need among people with various disabilities that may include physical, intellectual and sensory, or a combination of these, can be gauged from the findings of research conducted by the Boarding House Action Group (*The inner city squeeze*, 1997). This groups' findings show that a high proportion of individuals (approximately 81%) living in boarding houses in the inner-Brisbane area, including both Fortitude Valley and New Farm, are in receipt of a pension or benefits. A Disability Allowance was the most cited source of income for these people (36%), with a further small percentage (4.2%) being in receipt of sickness benefits (*The inner city squeeze*, 1997:36). Of the fifty informants who participated in the Ecumenical Coffee Brigade Project, forty-nine participants were in receipt of a DSS pension or benefit, with the most common form being a Disability Support Pension, and a number of these people describing themselves as 'homeless' (Coleman, 1997:12, 17).

The work by Castleton and colleagues (1995) has shown that adult literacy needs are not consistent across the various groups of people formed according to the nature of their disability and a range of personal and social factors. A further significant finding of this study related to the low motivation of many people with disabilities, largely due to the low expectations held by others of their ability to achieve, and to the limited range of adult options available to them on leaving school (Castleton, Schiffmann and Richards, 1995:41). This study also found that social and personal outcomes from literacy provision were often seen to be more significant than vocational outcomes (Castleton et al, 1995:41).

People with physical, intellectual and sensory disabilities do access the 139 Club, though there was not much reported evidence of people with severe physical disabilities using the Club's facilities. These clients often seek assistance in completing official forms as well as in reading health-related information provided by health and welfare professionals. Many of the clients of 139 Club are reported with substance abuse, with alcohol the substance most often linked to older clients and drug abuse more likely to be found among its younger client group. Though it is impossible to determine the extent of this problem, informants at 139 Club and others familiar with the homeless people who frequent the Fortitude Valley/New Farm area, reported concern about people who may also be inadvertently abusing their system through incorrect dosages of prescribed drugs. This situation is generally explained by clients' inability to correctly interpret the information provided, or by their lack of knowledge about the condition which is being treated.

People from non-English speaking background

Records kept by the 139 Club show that a considerable number of their clients come from non-English speaking backgrounds. Many NESB people, besides generally experiencing lower levels of English literacy skills than people from English speaking backgrounds, may experience additional barriers which are often related to cultural differences (ANTA, 1995). The SAL (1997) data identifies the impact of language background, language use patterns, place of birth and related variables on English literacy performance, and ANTA(1995: 23) has claimed that "people without adequate English language, literacy and numeracy skills

are highly vulnerable in the community and stand to gain a great deal from opportunities for learning". Though NESB people made up only a small proportion (4%) of people living in boarding houses in Brisbane's inner city (*The inner city squeeze*, 1997:36), they are represented among the homeless people who are served by the Ecumenical Coffee Brigade (Coleman, 1997:2). The Survey of Aspects of Literacy (1997) finding that shows many NESB people may have difficulty in understanding and responding to Australian bureaucratic demands, and in using health care and other community services effectively, is borne out by Coleman's (1997) study for this group, and for all other groups of clients of the Ecumenical Coffee Brigade and of the 139 Club.

Unemployed people

The unemployment rate across the potential client group using the 139 Club is higher than the Australian average. The SAL data reveals that literacy skill levels are deemed as important contributors to labour market success and are also linked to economic and social advancement.

The literacy needs of the unemployed have been addressed in a number of reports that have focused on literacy among particular target groups. For example, Castleton and colleagues (1995:49) noted that literacy was identified as a barrier to employment and/or training for the unemployed in remote areas of Queensland, and that jobseekers were found within all the target groups focussed upon in that study: namely Indigenous people, people of non-English speaking backgrounds, youth, women, people with a disability and people who had served time in correctional centres (Castleton, Schiffmann and Richards, 1995:60).

Youth employment: A working solution, the Report by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training (1997: xvi), identified the "importance of literacy to individual development and self-confidence as indisputable", and stated that "the correlation between poor levels of literacy and numeracy, early school leaving and unemployment is undeniable". The significance of this statement is reinforced when read with further findings of that report that total full-time and part-time employment for 15 to 24 year olds has fallen by 3 per cent since 1982, with the most severe decline in the number of full-time jobs occurring for the 15 to 19 year olds. This decline has not been offset by any comparable increase in part-time jobs, with an overall drop of 10.6% over the last 15 years in jobs for this age group (*Youth employment: A working solution*, 1997:2). When coupled with ABS data that show the proportion of early school leavers and those who never attended school in the potential client group to be considerably higher than the national average, the needs of this particular group may become more apparent.

McNaught and colleagues (1996) reported on a 1993 study that profiled CES-registered jobseekers, noting that this study identified significant needs among jobseekers who were of non-English speaking background as well as native speakers. They noted that the figures reported in this 1993 report may not represent an accurate account of the language, literacy and numeracy needs of jobseekers, citing the ability of native speakers to develop coping strategies to manage their literacy problems, and the fact that many women who may be in need of literacy provision do not register with the CES if they have a partner who is working, as possible reasons for this situation (McNaught, Candlin, Plimer and Pugh, 1996:36).

People who are out of work are present within the groups of people who attend the 139 Club, with some of these actively seeking employment. Included in this group are youth as well as older clients, especially some males aged between 20 and 45. However, many of the unemployed people who are accessing the 139 Club are known not to be actively seeking employment, with some of these reported as defining themselves as 'not employable'.

The aged

According to official data, the area served by the 139 Club has a high proportion of people in older age groups, many of whom may be expected to experience difficulties in coping with the specific literacy skills required when reading health and other public information as well as in dealing with many of the quantitative literacy demands of documents relating to age and health benefits, financial dealings and everyday life (ABS, 1997:60). The 139 Club has a number of clients aged 65 years and over who come to the Club for social interaction, recreational activities and support with literacy-related tasks. Many of these clients reside in boarding houses and hostels in the local area.

Boarding House Action Group study

The report of The Boarding House Action Group, *The inner city squeeze* (1997) has been a significant source of data for this project as its findings reflect a number of concerns pertinent to many of the clients of the 139 Club, and to this project. This report has pointed out that boarding houses have played a significant role in housing the residents of inner city suburbs of Brisbane since earliest European settlement. However, data collected by the Action Group found that boarding house residents are amongst the most financially disadvantaged in the community, with most, (around 81%) relying on government income support. Cost, location and community support were the reasons identified by boarding house residents for their choice of housing. Over recent times, inner Brisbane has, however, witnessed large scale redevelopment of boarding houses which previously served the needs of this financially disadvantaged group. The Boarding House Action Group (1997) audit of boarding house in the inner northern suburbs of Brisbane indicated that 37.8% of boarding houses have closed in the area in the period 1987 - 1996, thus denying many residents of the area an affordable housing option.

This survey of persons living in rooms/boarding houses in inner Brisbane suggests that a rich cultural mix is evident within this area, including a significant number of residents who are Indigenous Australians. The findings from this study also confirm previous data which suggest a high rate of disability among boarding house residents, as well as an ageing population, although there now appears to be a shift to a younger group of residents. This project revealed that 21% of the boarding house residents who were interviewed were under the age of 25 years, with this fact explained by increasing numbers of students who are accessing boarding houses; by the move to maintain people with mental illness in the community; and by the numbers of people with disabilities seeking housing that provides meals and some support. The study also highlighted the very low income of boarding house residents in inner Brisbane with these residents generally receiving an annual income in the vicinity of $9,000 to $12,000.

The boarding house residents interviewed by the BHAG (1997) identified that they accessed a wide range of community welfare services, within the inner Brisbane area, including the 139 Club, a finding supported by data supplied by the Club.

Perceived need established

Again, the various reports cited in the previous section present a clear case of 'perceived' need for literacy training for the various groups of people who may be represented within the category of 'homeless', and clients of the 139 Club. Various causes are offered for this need, including peoples' poor schooling experiences; lack of opportunities to attend school; the nature of particular disabilities some clients have or their state of health; lack of access to the provision of services, and lack of appropriate literacy skills. There is general agreement that the consequences of these factors in peoples' lives is a perceived 'need' for

adult literacy provision to counter personal, cultural and institutional barriers to full community participation.

The common premise underlying much of this literature is that literacy training is essential for all people within the community, with most reports grounding their arguments in particular 'official' definitions of literacy that emphasise its essential personal benefits, and its relationship to wider societal economic goals. The argument that is presented leaves little room for people prescribed with limited literacy skills to be seen as currently making any worthwhile contributions to their community. Furthermore, literacy training is generally offered as the only way of redressing this situation. In this sense the literature may be seen as presenting "popular and prevailing conceptions of literacy [that] equate its acquisition with positive and unproblematic outcomes" (Prinsloo & Breier, 1996:16)

What can be overlooked in this process is consideration of what literacy provision means for its intended recipients. This point has been made very clearly by Prinsloo and Breier (1996) in their report of a research project investigating the social uses of literacy in a range of contexts in South Africa. They noted that a review of completed research on adult literacy in South Africa outlined a particular bias:

1. studies with literacy as their main concern were mostly about *literacy provision*, and successes and setbacks faced by particular interventions But this research was remarkably quiet about the *acquisition* of literacy. What had people acquired in these classes, and what had it meant and done for them?
2. writings on adult literacy focused almost exclusively *on the providers of literacy*, on their trials and tribulations, triumphs and failures as well as their struggles for advantage over one another. Not much was said about the recipients of literacy provision at all.

(italics authors' emphasis)
(Prinsloo & Breier, 1996:16).

The same kinds of conclusions may be reached about some of the research undertaken in this country and reinforces the need to draw attention away from the discourses and practices of policy-makers and providers and focus more directly on discourses that are centred on the people deemed to need literacy support. This focus on the recipients of literacy provision leads into a consideration of how expressed need can be established.

Establishing expressed need

In this part of the study, emphasis is given to the analysis of data from the focus group sessions, interviews and informal discussions held with informants familiar with, or employed by, the 139 Club as well as clients of that organisation. In deference to the sensitivities involved in addressing the topic with clients, formal, taped interviews were not held with clients. Rather the researchers engaged in informal discussion with a number of clients, then wrote up field notes of these meetings.

Interviewees were selected for the various perspectives they could offer to the examination of the relationship between literacy and homelessness in its various forms, based on the belief that "interaction is institutional insofar as participants' institutional or professional identities are somehow made relevant to the work activities in which they are engaged" (Drew & Heritage, 1992:4). From an ethnomethodological perspective, the selected informants are members of the particular context of social activity under study, that is the relationship between literacy and homelessness. They are practical actors involved in the ongoing achievement of that context, and, in Hester and Eglin's (1997:1) terms, "practical analysts of, and inquirers into, the world, using whatever materials there are at hand to get done the tasks and business they are engaged in". The daily life of doing various tasks, business and inquiries are invariably and overwhelmingly conducted

through language, especially talk, so an analysis of members' talk about literacy and homelessness becomes an invaluable way of inquiring into the social world. As each of the participants had some practical, applied knowledge of literacy and homelessness, the researchers were able to assume that they would be able to interpret these terms in some meaningful ways that would be shaped and constrained by their orientations to institutions and particular settings. Interviews, as accounts, are part of the world they describe, and from this position, it becomes possible to hear interview responses as "displays of perspectives and moral forms" (Silverman (1985:171). Arguing in another place, Silverman (1993:105), has claimed that interview data "reproduce[s] and rearticulate[s] cultural particulars grounded in given patterns of social organisation".

In their talk about homeless people and literacy, the informants drew on a cultural history of professional and community interpretations that they used to present talk hearable as both meaningful and trustworthy. The interviews provided opportunities for them to give various accounts of the relationships they perceived between homelessness and literacy. It then followed that such a working knowledge held by the selected informants, entailed particular understandings of 'homelessness', potentially that some homeless people were deemed to have low levels of literacy that could be addressed through some form of literacy training.

Establishing the category of 'homelessness' in talk

The category of 'homelessness' was clearly enacted in the talk of the informants and presented as an established category from traditional discourses including those of social welfare and of the labour market. There was a high degree of consistency as informants discussed and described homeless people, indicating the presence of widely held, institutional points of view on this topic. Homeless people are certain kinds of people with certain kinds of attributes. They are typically depicted as:

- low in self esteem
- lacking in motivation
- lacking skills
- more likely to be male than female
- more likely to be middle-aged than youthful
- likely to have health problems
- lacking insight into their own situation
- lacking strategies to affect change in their situation.

A notable feature of the talk was the relational pairing of 'homelessness' and 'hopelessness', so that not only were homeless people described as living in extreme poverty, excluded from opportunities for education, recreation and social contact, but the talk frequently likened 'not having a home' to 'hopelessness' and consequently offered little hope for people changing these circumstances. Again, this category is offered up for comparison, more through omission than stated, to that category of people who 'are suitably housed' with 'more hopeful' prospects. In the words of one informant, many of the homeless people who used the 139 Club were "totally unmotivated... it's part of the culture that they've become" while another informant likened lack of motivation to a lack of hope, and, in her words, showed that homeless people were "in a sense being realistic about what what [sic] their chances are". In describing the sense of hopelessness that a further informant believed was felt by homeless people, she posed the question: "How many times do you go up and get a smack in the face before you realise it hurts?"

This talk in general reflected the traditional, stereotypical categorisation of homeless people presented in official discourses of policy and practice, and demonstrates commonly-held beliefs about this category of people. Working within this established category, and it

ensuing category attributions, emanating from traditional social welfare and labour market discourses on homelessness, enabled the interviewees to establish links between these discourses and readily-available discourses on adult literacy. Discourses on adult literacy, evidenced both in policy and practice have typically identified adults with limited literacy skills with a similar range of attributions as those ascribed to homeless people. This link thus enabled informants to describe various ways in which homeless people had a problem that may be addressed through some form, or forms of literacy training.

Accounting for homelessness

The correlation between homelessness and literacy was realised in the talk by recourse to a complex set of causal relations that are representative of an institutional perspective. Invariably the link between being homeless and literacy was related to an intricate pattern of culturally determined attributes pertaining to experiences of schooling, race, health and socio-economic status. This sophisticated network of categorisation and attribution clearly assigned certain people in positions of difficulty in the community. This assembly of people with a specific range of cultural attributes thus allowed for the formulation of taken-for-granted propositions that informants applied in the explanations of the causes and consequences of homelessness, and its link with literacy. Typically, informants grounded explanations of the conditions of 'homelessness' in personal and behavioural factors rather than in systemic terms such as the nature of schooling, the state of the labour market, opportunities for retraining, perceptions and treatment of mental health problems in the general community, or the contraction of boarding house accommodation for low income earners. In this sense the talk demonstrates some of the moral features underpinning the social order of homelessness. While the existence of homeless people, with their various attributions, is seen as not a good thing for society, 'society' is generally not held responsible for this condition.

Schooling experiences

The attribute most frequently selected by informants to explain homelessness focused on individual's school experiences. This selection provided taken-for-granted propositions with which informants endeavoured to explain homelessness and its link to literacy. For example one informant from a youth service stated that many homeless people had inadequate, or inconsistent patterns of, schooling, while another interviewee working with a welfare agency reported that premature school leaving was a factor in homelessness. Another participant informing on the homeless situation of young people reported that eviction from home and exclusion from school were predominant factors for this age group.

The lack of schooling was regularly linked by informants with other cultural attributes such as race and low socio-economic status to both describe and explain homelessness. A number of clients of the club, especially men over the age of 40, for example, accounted for their homelessness by co-selecting their premature exit from school with the necessity to assist with farm labouring in rural communities during times of economic hardship, while others used their ethnic background, lack of opportunities of education in their country of origin and consequent lack of skill, particularly in English language, as the cause for being homeless. Additionally, a small number of these informants also described the lack of re-training opportunities for lowly-skilled workers after injury at work for their inability to find and keep suitable employment, and therefore housing. In another instance, one interviewee responded to an inquiry about the link between school attendance, literacy and homelessness, with the comment that, for some indigenous Australians, "schooling itself was just too difficult for them". Informants involved in working with homeless people generally substantiated their explanations with a range of anecdotal accounts drawn from their professional experiences.

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In most of these accounts, however, the responsibility for the poor school experience, and consequent lack of skills, was located with the individuals concerned, not with various practices of the institutions involved. Clients of the club who were interviewed also generally attributed their "lack of interest" or lack of aptitude in schooling as their own fault, with just one informant claiming that "the teachers weren't interested in me".

Health factors

The majority of informants also called upon a range of health factors as further attributions of homeless people. These factors included substance addiction, in particular alcoholism among the older homeless, and drug addiction among the younger age groups. In a few instances homeless men also linked their alcohol addiction to their inability to find and stay in employment and to their homelessness. An informant who has daily contact with homeless youth identified health factors related to drug addiction among gay and lesbian youth as a serious issue with this group, and a frequent cause of their homelessness, poor schooling experiences and lack of skills.

Other health factors including mental and physical health problems were also offered as explanations of homelessness and attributes of the homeless, with particular attention given to those mental disorders that involved certain behavioural difficulties that often reinforced social isolation, and sometimes precipitated eviction from boarding house accommodation. One informant in particular emphasised the presence of psychiatric disabilities as a significant factor for homeless women, describing some women in this condition as "actively psychotic". Again, other cultural attributes such as poor experiences of schooling and race were linked with health factors to no only give explanations of homelessness, but also of homeless people's lack of skills. This attribution process was particularly true for Indigenous homeless, who were frequently characterised as lacking skills, suffering alcohol addiction and being homeless. Once more, responsibility for poor health was generally situated with the individuals concerned rather than with institutions or practices within the wider community.

Social Isolation

Social isolation, described in terms of lack of family and/or community ties, was given by many informants, including clients, as both a cause and effect of homelessness. This attribute was regularly co-selected with other attributes such as health factors and race to describe and explain varying conditions of homelessness. A number of the centre's clients are non-English speaking males who live in nearby boarding houses. These men described the lack of family support or acceptance as a contributing factor to the social isolation they experienced as well as the reason they relied on centre staff to assist with a range of literacy tasks involved with maintaining social security or welfare benefits, and their health.

However, while social isolation was offered by informants as both an explanation and attribution of 'homelessness' among most clients, this was not given as the case for Indigenous homeless people. In their talk, some informants spoke of Indigenous people who 'lived' in the area as having close social relationships with family and peer groups. This was reinforced by the accounts of other interviewees who described alcohol as both a unifying and destructive element for many Indigenous people. In the words of one informant when "You say to them 'Okay, give up the grog', that's not what you're saying, you're saying 'Give up your family and the other people you know' ". According to these informants, in the experience of many Indigenous people, giving up alcohol means giving up social contact with family and friends. Furthermore, even though Indigenous people experience cohesion within their own social groupings, they are, none the less, marginalised by mainstream society, and reportedly, to some extent within the 139 Club community.

Literacy needs of homeless people

Informants variously described literacy as the basic skills necessary to function effectively in day-to-day life, giving different accounts, drawn from their professional experience, of how these skills were necessary for homeless people: for example, filling out the various forms necessary in dealing with bureaucracies and welfare agencies, completing job applications, reading rental agreements, having essential on-the-job reading and writing skills, reading instructions pertaining to health treatment. While these needs were recognised as existing within groups in the wider community, they were described as being more acute for homeless people who were characterised as frequently lacking the support of family or friends who might normally assist with these tasks, and also, at times, as being at risk of exploitation due to their lack of skills.

In responding to questions about the extent of low literacy skills among the Club's client group, informants claimed that up to 50% may have limited literacy skills, while another interviewee stated that there was "absolute total illiteracy amongst some of the people". An informant working with homeless youth at another welfare centre in close proximity to the 139 Club, made a similar estimation about the extent of low literacy skills for this group, stating that young people frequently responded with the statement "I'm stupid" when acknowledging they have limited literacy skills. This informant did point out, however, that this client group rarely voluntarily self-identified that they have problems with literacy, but may admit to this situation in the course of day-to-day interactions with staff of that organisation. The tendency of this group of homeless to locate the problem with themselves only reinforces the commonly-held beliefs within the wider community that the causes of low levels of skills are situated with individuals not with wider societal structures and organisations, while their reluctance to divulge this predicament again reflects the effects of dominant discourses on adult literacy, prevalent in the popular media, that attach a certain stigma, with moral implications, to this condition.

Very few of the clients of the 139 Club, also were reported as self-identifying that they have limited literacy skills, but at the same time, were described as freely asking for assistance with literacy tasks when it was required, enjoying the 'non-judgmental' approach taken by the Club's staff in this matter. Furthermore, none of the clients who were informants to the project either identified concern with their literacy skills, or accounted for their homeless situation, or lack of employment on the basis of their limited literacy skills.

In terms of expressing the significance of the literacy status of homeless people, informants were in agreement, that while it was an important issue among the coterie of factors that impacted on the lives of homeless people, it was not the most significant element in their lives, and neither was it described as the cause of homelessness. Rather than seeing lack of literacy as a precipitating factor towards homelessness, the talk of informants, excluding that of clients of the centre, generally identified limited literacy skills as an integral part of a range of characteristics of homelessness, namely low socio-economic status, lack of employment opportunities, lack of disposable income for suitable accommodation, lack of self-esteem and motivation for learning.

Within these accounts, literacy was presented as the key to equipping individuals and groups of people so that they could make various transformations in their lives. In this sense, the talk resonated with a number of the major themes presented in official discourses not only around literacy but also those discourses that link literacy and work (Castleton, 1997).

While there was some agreement with the causes and effects of poor literacy skills, and unquestioned consequences of literacy training depicted in official discourses, there was also acknowledgment of the extent to which these discourses did not reflect the reality experienced by many of the homeless. Among those interviewees who defined themselves

as 'job seekers', for example, there was a lived understanding of the actuality of the current economic situation in which jobs, particularly jobs that require low levels of skill, were difficult to find. According to the majority of the participants in this project, most of these jobseekers were resigned to this situation, while others, including many youth were angry because "they've been brought up on a diet of get educated and we'll give you a job".

The limited compliance with, and trust in, those parts of official discourses that promote a belief in the unquestioned good of literacy and therefore in the benefits of literacy training by most informants was regularly substantiated by the calling up of those discourses with which they were more familiar. This finding serves to highlight Street's (1996) concerns over how literacy can be valorised in certain discourses and Castleton's (1997:261) cautionary note that "literacy [can] take on a signification that far outweighs what features of social life can be adequately and appropriately explained in terms of its actual role in people's lives".

Linking homelessness and literacy - expressed need established

Having stated a reason for caution when presenting literacy training as some kind of panacea for a whole host of social ills, there were, however various indications in the talk of the informants that provide some directions for the types of literacy training that may be worthwhile for homeless people. A common feature of informants' accounts was talk of the various networks that exist among homeless people, both within the various welfare centres they use and beyond. Moreover, these networks were characterised by accepted norms of behaviour, established and maintained by the members of those networks. In the words of one informant, "I don't think they'd survive as long as long [sic] as they have in the world out there if they didn't have rules and ethics that that [sic] they go by". Within these networks particular people are known to take on various roles, with evidence that there are those who assume the position of 'literacy broker', a term used by Hull (1995) and others to describe someone who applies his/her literacy skills on behalf of others. The networks may be seen as manifestations of the 'communities of practice', identified by researchers such as Gee, Hull and Lankshear (1996), Prinsloo and Breier (1996), Castleton (1997), Hull (1997), Barton and Hamilton (1998) as existing in a range of contexts from workplaces to community settings, that are characterised by the mutual exchange of skills and practices.

These existing, though informal, structures were seen to offer the best possible base upon which to build any useful form of literacy provision, underlying the basic premise of beginning with the clients and what they have already in place, and working from there towards equipping clients for self-determination. This emphasis reinforces Street's (1996:4 - 5) argument that, when discussing literacy and the need for literacy provision for certain groups of people, attention should be more on the notion of 'change' rather than on that of 'access', as this lead to a different view of literacy and of the nature of literacy provision. If the focus is put on 'change', then literacy, and consequently the recipients of provision, can be viewed in a far more positive light, emphasising what clients have rather than what they lack. Such a framing allows for recognition of the ways in which people use literacy as a resource, deployed by individuals but also shared by members of communities of practice, in which participants assume different roles for different purposes.

Links made in the literature from Australia (e.g. Hartley, 1989), and other places (Trumper, 1997) between health factors and low literacy are reinforced in the talk of the participants, with many informants giving various accounts of the connection between poor physical and mental health management, low literacy skills and homelessness. In a number of instances, low literacy skill was reported as preventing people from taking control over their health. According to a number of informants, the need for some homeless people to be able to take more responsibility for their health and well-being creates an

appropriate way of making literacy relevant in the lives of many of the homeless. As one interviewee who works with homeless youth defined it, they need to "work from a harm minimisation frame to help young people to maximise their health". Furthermore, there was evidence in the talk of ways in which literacy as a communal resource was deployed to address other factors impinging on the lives of homeless people, such as securing and keeping suitable housing and support services.

While there were some jobseekers among the homeless people involved in this study, it was clear that many of them were not jobseekers, nor likely to become so. Generally speaking, homeless people were not described as wanting literacy training as a way to access employment and/or more training, but rather looking to it as a means of enabling them to achieve greater personal and collective responsibility over their lives. Discourses on literacy for the homeless people therefore need to be less about providing the means by which people can access training, and maybe employment, and more about helping them "build the bridges" so that "homeless people can access mainstream services" and assume some measures of choice and control in their lives.

Outcomes of the study

This study has demonstrated the importance of ensuring that claims made for the 'need' of literacy training are grounded not only in the accepted, official discourses of 'apparent' and 'perceived' need, but also suitably reflect the third perspective of 'expressed' need that comes closer to the lived experiences of the individuals and groups framed within these discourses. It has shown that there can be disparities between the various ways in which literacy need is represented in official discourses and in practice. Official discourses on literacy and the needs of particular groups of people determined to have low levels of literacy, may not adequately portray the realities of how the consequences of low levels of literacy can be played out in the everyday lives of homeless people. In this sense these discourses, that both constitute and position homeless people in particular ways, may operate as "an actual act of power and regulation" (Luke, Nakata, Singh and Smith, 1993: 141) over these subjects in the world, determining what opportunities will be made available, and those that will be restricted, to homeless people. Official discourses can also be shown not to recognise the many literacy practices that exist and flourish outside official sites such as school, work and bureaucracy, but which result in making many people competent communicators (Street, 1997). Other discourses that challenge the dominant representations of literacy must be heard not only because they offer more realistic representations of everyday literacy users and their practices, but because they challenge the inherent power structures that exist within such dominant representations.

The ways in which discourses around 'expressed' need reflected themes presented in the discourses of 'apparent' and 'perceived' need demonstrate how discourses can be argued to both reflect and produce social realities (Castleton, 1997). However, the points of dissension between these discourses that have surfaced in this research also indicate the possibilities of informing and acting on these dominant discourses so that they more accurately reflect the realities of homelessness, and appropriately incorporate opportunities for homeless people to be represented in ways that best 'express' their needs and aspirations. Though official discourses on need for literacy provision for the homeless focus on issues of access and, presumably, equity, and are primarily outcomes driven, the actual talk of 'expressed' need focused more on literacy as the vehicle for transformational change. Overall, the study has highlighted the importance of the connection between improving literacy skill and better quality of life outcomes for the homeless. In particular, this quality of life relates directly to the ability to have greater personal control over issues such as health, financial management, housing, and day-to-day interactions with government and welfare agencies.

Conclusion

The findings of this study lead to consequences for the kinds of literacy provision that could be offered to accommodate the needs of homeless people. The following points are raised for policy makers, infra-structure support providers as well as for literacy providers.

Realistically, there is only a small number of jobseekers among the homeless. This group could be targeted for literacy provision that focuses on improving literacy skills in vocational contexts. However, the kind of provision offered needs to include case management and job placement support services as well as be flexible and responsive enough to accommodate all factors of the lifestyle of homeless people, particularly youth, who make up much of this group.

For the majority of homeless people, however, the focus needs to be on literacy as a communal resource utilised variously by individuals and groups. The objective of any provision must be focused on equipping these people with the skills to achieve some social transformations in their everyday lives. The strategies of provision should incorporate existing networking arrangements that homeless people already access, including recognising the different roles that are in place within these networks.

Both of these recommendations have pedagogical implications for program development and delivery, resource development and personnel deployment. Rather than adopting traditional approaches that centre around a set program of structured classes, providers must view every interaction as a fully-fledged literacy (and learning) event. This approach has significant resourcing implications that need to be addressed in the preparation of tenders for the supply of funding for such programs.

There is need for greater collaboration between the various agencies that come into day-to-day contact with homeless people. Personnel involved in functional operations within agencies and provision must be more aware of the relationship between literacy and daily life, including such factors as employment, housing and health so that they can use every opportunity to not only mediate and facilitate better lifestyle outcomes for the client group, but increase skill levels at the same time.

The implementation of these recommendations that arise out of the outcomes of the study will assist in achieving the prime objective of all literacy programs, that is the opportunity for greater participation in all aspects of community life, thereby enhancing individuals' potential to be the kind of citizens they want to be. Setting full citizenship participation as a goal of these programs recognises the multifarious ways in which literacy serves individuals and groups in all aspects of life in today's world.

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van Kraayenoord, C. (ed) *A Survey of Adult Literacy Provision for People with Intellectual Disabilities* (1992) Canberra; DEET.

Youth employment: A working solution (1997). Report by the House of Representatives Standing committee on Employment, Education and Training. Canberra: AGPS.

Appendix 1

Interview protocol used with focus groups and individual interviewees

Introduce purpose of project and seek permission to tape.

1 How do you define the term "literacy"?

2 How would you assess the literacy competencies of centre's clients, or homeless people that you come in contact with?

3 How many of the people you have contact with do you believe have limited literacy skills?

4 What is the nature of the limited literacy skills of the people in question?

5 How are these limited literacy skills demonstrated?

6 How do clients describe/talk about their literacy skills? What causes/effects do they talk about?

7 How important do they rate their literacy skills? Do they see their literacy competence as any kind of barrier? To what? How do they deal with this? Have any of them sought assistance, or attended classes? Any difficulties with this?

8 How importantly do you rate literacy for the clients, and people you come in contact with? Why do you believe that the people in question have problems with literacy tasks?

9 What do you believe to be the most appropriate way/s of responding to these? Would clients agree with this?

10 Do you want to ask any questions?

Appendix 2

The project identified some useful resources that can be used when working with homeless people. Annotations provided by Rosemary Jewell.

Trumpener, B. (1997) *Gimme Shelter* (off the internet - http://www.nad.ea/lithome.thm). A Canadian "resource and starting point for critical discussion about literacy and homelessness".

Norris, J. and Kennington, P. (1992) *Developing Literacy Programs for Homeless Adults.* Florida: Kreiger Publishing Company. Another resource placing literacy learning in the context of the homeless lifestyle with discussion on how programs can evolved. this is based on US experience.

From "Outside" to "Inside" for the disadvantaged: a workbook (1997) Adelaide: Adelaide Central Mission. ANTA Project Demonstrating Best Practice in VET, 1997. A report documenting the learning provision at the Byron Place Community Centre (a service of the Adelaide Central Mission) and the educational effectiveness of their programs which include Certificate 1 in Preparatory Education and Certificate in General Education for Adults. Cherilyn Graham is the contact person for this project - 08 8202 5111. email: cherilyn@camtech.net.au

But I'm not a therapist: further discussion about literacy work with survivors of trauma. Horsman, J. (off the internet - http://alphacom.gbrown.on.ca/Domino/GBCWEB.nsf). This is a discussion paper and Jenny Horsman welcomes further discussion - email:jhorsman@direct.com

Roomers - by residents for residents. A newsletter (off the internet http://esnlc.asn.au/esnlc/roomers.htm). A Melbourne project publishing pictures and stories in the Port Phillip area. At the moment there is only one publication. email address for further information - esnlc@yarranet.net.au.

ABS Census data (free off the internet http://www.abs.gov.au under Community Profiles) gives some information on the characteristics of local populations.

On the internet - a forum/discussion opportunity to discuss "issues surrounding literacy among the homeless population, including a factual overview of this growing field, innovative and effective program design, policy suggestions and legislative updates, information and technical assistance resources for service providers". to subscribe send email message to: LISTPROC@LITERACY.NIFL.GOV with the message - subscribe NIFL-HOMELESS<your first name last name>.

The internet has many sites (mainly US) where workers and homeless people express their opinions and tell their stories. Mainly accessed by doing searches with "homeless" and "adult literacy".

Chapter

5

An investigation into the level of literacy support skills needed by Queensland workers in youth work practice

Dale Johnson

1. Introduction

Aim of the Research

The aim of this research was to investigate the need, as perceived by Queensland youth workers, of incorporating basic literacy assessment, assistance and referral skills into generalist youth work practice vocational training. Currently, literacy support competencies are not acknowledged as a unit(s) of competence within the national youth work competencies nor the proposed national training packages for the community services industry. At the same time, substantial anecdotal evidence, from regional and urban enquiries gathered by the Youth Sector Training Council of Queensland, suggests that youth workers are regularly providing, or being asked by young people themselves to provide literacy support within their daily job roles.

The research was designed to investigate and analyse:

- the existing experiences of youth workers in relation to the scope of literacy difficulties experienced by the young people they support;
- the strategies currently used by youth workers to identify and support young people with literacy difficulties;
- the factors youth workers outline as major barriers to supporting young people with literacy difficulties;
- the level of literacy support competencies youth workers state they need to support young people with whom they interact.

1.1 The Youth Sector in Queensland

The youth sector is a large subset of the community services and health industry. "Youth sector workers are people who work with, or for, the benefit of young people as a significant proportion of their work" (YSTC, 1995). Youth sector workers interact with young people, aged between 12 and 25 years, across a wide variety of workplace situations and support young people from many different family and cultural backgrounds. Youth sector work like

"...adult literacy is unified by principles of access and equity".

The industry is characterised by a significant proportion of part time and volunteer workers, centred within community owned and managed organisations. Workers are often employed or recruited as volunteers on a project-specific basis, dependent on further government project funding for the continuation of community programs. As a result, there is a high level of worker mobility across organisations and throughout Queensland regions.

Youth Workers and Young People

Youth workers operate across a wide variety of non government, government and local government workplaces. Youth sector worker activities include:

- supporting young people during a time of personal crisis, for example: homelessness; abuse, legal difficulties; family crises; mental health issues; thoughts of suicide; substances misuse or sexuality issues
- supporting young people to achieve personal goals, for example: schooling support; training and employment opportunities; information and referral centres; political, social or legal advocacy
- supporting young people to have fun, for example: art and cultural pursuits; recreational programmes
- ongoing practical support.

For a very large number of young people experiencing social, economic or legal difficulties in Queensland, a youth worker skilled in relating to and working specifically with young people is often likely to be approached by young people themselves. Young people approach youth workers for general interaction, referral, support and advocacy during those times of crisis, or personal reflection, which characterise the developmental processes of moving from childhood to adulthood. As a result, youth workers are more likely than many other industry groups to be in a position to develop supportive relationships built on the principles of mutual trust and collaborative decision-making with those groups of young people who have been *"historically under-represented and disadvantaged in the vocational education and training system"* (Department of Training and Industrial Relations, 1997:6). The majority of youth workers are working daily with the challenge of providing support, at a personal level, to young people *"whose needs are not being met within the education and training sector or in the youth labour market. Within Australia, these young people are the 15 to 19 year-olds who are either unemployed (87 500), outside the education and labour markets (42 000), or only able to find part-time jobs for themselves (71 300)"* (Dwyer, 1996:70). A significant proportion of these disadvantaged young people are early school leavers, itinerant, experiencing homelessness, coping with unstable or violent home circumstances or experiencing a wide variety of other life altering personal issues affecting their participation in community or educational life for a significant period of time.

The length of time a youth worker will interact closely with a young person or a group of young people will vary, depending directly on the purpose and design of the youth work position within the employing organisation. The length of support time with a young person can be loosely defined as long term, medium term or short term. A long term intervention role would involve an ongoing and open-ended period, lasting any period of time longer than six months. A medium term intervention role would involve a negotiated or contracted period of one month to six months and a short term intervention role would involve a one-off support role or support for up to one week.

Different lengths of intervention time and the type of support provided by youth workers will shape the level of literacy support skills identified as needed by individual youth workers in their job role. Examples of youth sector support roles may be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1: *Examples of Youth Worker Intervention Roles*

Long Term Support Roles	Medium Term Support Roles	Short Term Support Roles
• youth counsellors • housing support workers • parenting group workers	• drop in centre workers • community education workers • family planning workers • recreation workers	• emergency relief/ accommodation workers • independent support workers at police interviews • case management workers

1.2 *Literacy and the youth sector*

> *"With respect to the industrial context, there is an absence of specific reference to spoken and written language in industry competency standards. This 'invisibility' of language hinders the process of developing appropriate provision to meet workplace and vocational needs"*
> (Burns, Brown & Prince, 1994:36).

The youth sector national competency standards developed in 1995/6 have very limited specific reference to literacy issues. Written and verbal feedback options are listed generally within a number of the range of variables statements. However, when listings of *"issues facing young people"* occur within units' range of variables statements, literacy is not one of the issues included, nor is literacy included in the knowledge and other supporting evidence statements throughout the units of competence (ANTA, 1996).

Reflecting Burns, Brown and Prince's (1994) broad assertion, there is an absence of specific reference to spoken and written language competency statements in the youth sector industry standards. A similar situation exists within the emerging community services national competency standards and training packages developed in 1997.

The youth work industry and the literacy field have yet to interact in any practical and meaningful way within the national industry standards. This situation has two major negative effects for industry workers: a lack of encumbered funds within the State Training Profile to provide literacy training to youth workers, where appropriate, and a situation where young people's literacy needs may not be recorded nor managed at the first point of contact.

2. *Methodology*

Participating Organisations

Sixty youth sector organisations were approached by telephone, with information on the time estimated to complete a prepared questionnaire and invited to participate in this investigation. Of the sixty organisations approached, forty one organisations chose to participate. The organisations approached were selected at random from the memberships listings of the two peak bodies within the youth sector. A complete listing of participating organisations is available in Appendix 1.

The organisations approached to participate in the investigation, were located across nine Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations defined regions throughout Queensland and represented organisations located in both coastal and rural areas. The organisations also provided access to a wide variety of youth sector roles within both government and non government organisations, although the majority of participating organisations are located in the non government community sector, reflecting current employment trends within the youth sector.

Data Collection and Collation

The development of the questionnaire used in the investigation (refer Appendix B) was reviewed by a group of five youth sector workers. The instrument was designed to collect data for the investigation but also needed to be appropriately worded to produce valid responses that were meaningful to both youth sector workers and literacy specialists; a bridge was built between the use of common words and phrases that may represent differing practice concepts within both fields.

The questionnaire consisted of a series of structured questions designed to investigate the anecdotal evidence collected by the YSTC over a six month period and incorporated a section containing two unstructured questions to provide the opportunity for general comments relating to literacy issues and broader comments relating to the youth sector.

The questionnaire was piloted within six youth sector organisations, prior to the investigation taking place. As a result of feedback, two structured questions (Questions 1 and 7) within the questionnaire were altered for use in the investigation.

The responses to Questions 1 and 6 were collated using simple percentages based on the frequency of responses. The responses to Questions 2,3,4,7, 8 and 9 were collated using the development of categories and sub categories drawn from the range of responses collected. Question 5 responses were collated in two ways; the Yes or No responses were collated using the same method as Questions 1 and 6, while the additional comments submitted were placed in categories and sub categories.

The categories developed and the allocation of questionnaire responses to those categories were reviewed by an independent third party. In cases where there was not agreement on the inclusion of a response to a particular category or sub category the respondent was contacted, by telephone, for further clarification.

Clarification was sought to accurately categorise disputed responses on 4 occasions; agreement was reached in all cases. A frequency tally of responses within each of the defined categories was then completed.

3. *Findings and analysis of participant data*

The comments collected from the two unstructured questions have not been reported under category headings but instead have been included as quotes, where appropriate, throughout the analysis of data in this section and the discussion section that directly follows.

3.1 The number of young people identified with literacy difficulties

Over sixty-eight percent of responding organisations indicated they interact with between five and 10 young people, who are identified by youth workers as having literacy difficulties, every month. A conservative estimate of the figures in Table 2 indicates that youth workers within the participating organisations interact with a minimum of 290 young people every month who have difficulties undertaking literacy activities:

> *This is a huge issue in youth services and the school system hasn't addressed the problem adequately.*
>
> *Many young people are leaving school earlier in our area, under 16 years, and they present to our service with low literacy and numeracy skills.*

Table 2: *The Numbers of Young People Presenting with Literacy Difficulties During an Average Month*

0	1-5	5-10	more than 10
2	11	6	22

Youth workers, by their very role within the community, if not by personal choice, are more likely than most other industry sectors to be in a position to identify and record the level of literacy and numeracy difficulties existing within the population of disadvantaged Queensland young people. They are also well placed, if they so choose, to provide basic levels of literacy support to large numbers of disadvantaged young people, who would be highly unlikely to voluntarily approach existing educational or vocational institutions for assistance. In fact, for a substantial number of young people existing outside or avoiding mainstream interaction and policy strategies, literacy support by youth workers may prove to be the only option that these young people will willingly accept.

3.2 Identification strategies currently used by youth sector workers

Youth workers are currently using a variety of informal and formal strategies to identify those young people who are experiencing literacy difficulties. The data contained in Table 3 indicates that the assessment tool most likely to be used by youth workers is direct observation of young people filling out organisational intake forms. A variety of direct observation techniques are being used and are also likely to accompanied by oral strategies, incorporated into general conversation.

Most youth workers describe their approach to the identification and assessment of young people with literacy difficulties as *'ad hoc'* strategies.

These (Table 3) strategies conform closely to the definition of informal (diagnostic) assessment outlined by Doherty, Mangubhai and Shearer (1996). The major definitional difference is that the authors' definition of assessment is grounded in the context of a specific learning program within a vocational education organisation. Youth workers are assessing the literacy competence of young people within a limited literacy knowledge framework and in the workplace context.

Five organisations are currently not using any strategies to identify young people with literacy difficulties.

Few disadvantaged young people willingly self identify. Only a small number of the respondent organisations have established formal literacy assessment strategies or have developed collaborative literacy networks with local high schools or literacy providers.

Table 3: Identification Strategies Used by Youth Workers

Categories	Sub Categories	Frequency
No Identification Strategies		5
		Total: 5
Observation Strategies	while assisting to fill out intake forms	15
	when young person is working on computer	2
	when young person is reading newspapers, information pamphlets and brochures	4
	when working with young people in related programs/activities	2
		Total: 28
Oral Strategies	questions embedded in general/informal conversation	7
	ask directly about school qualifications or literacy difficulties	2
	discussing understanding of written material	9
		Total: 18
Self Identification	young people report literacy difficulties without prompting	5
		Total: 5
External Data Collection	contact with schools	4
	referred by other organisations who have already identified	2
		Total: 6
Formal Assessment Strategies	prepared tools	2
	internal literacy staff/volunteers	1
		Total: 3

3.3 Literacy assistance strategies currently used by youth sector workers

Seventy percent of the organisations are using strategies to support young people identified with literacy and numeracy difficulties. That support includes attempting to assist the young people wherever possible within the organisation, referring young people to other organisations and, in seven cases, attempting to provide specialist literacy help within the organisation.

By far, the largest category of assistance strategies are centred within the responding organisation through general, ad hoc support. These attempts at literacy support are currently occurring, even though the majority of general comments reflected that to do so was a huge strain on individual youth workers and organisational financial resources:

We have limited time to spend with them.

Lack of appropriate resources...lack of funding...lack of personnel...lack of time.

Seven organisations are implementing strategies involving specialist assistance within the organisation. However, that specialist assistance does not necessarily conform to the recognition requirements of adult literacy curricula. Only two organisations are clearly employing recognised literacy support specialists, offering CN LitNum through the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relation's community literacy funding programme.

Fourteen organisations are using referrals to other organisations with literacy support as a strategy. This seems an unusually low number of organisations, as youth sector workers use referral strategies as a major practice strategy in their role of working with young people. It raises the question, 'Why not with literacy and numeracy?"

Twenty-nine percent of organisation are not employing strategies to assist young people with literacy difficulties, either informally or formally.

Table 4: *Literacy Assistance Strategies Given by Youth Workers*

Categories	Sub Categories	Frequency
No Strategies		12
		Total: 12
Referral Strategies	to literacy courses or other community services with literacy	10
	to Tafe	4
		Total: 14
Seeking Literacy Resources in the Community		3
		Total: 3
General Support within Organisation	help young people with reading and completing forms	5
	help young people with general reading	5
	word games eg: Hangman	1
	informal classes	1
	individual support	3
	incorporate literacy skills life skills/ living programs	2
	develop own booklet for workplace literacy	1
	work collaboratively within the school system	4
	use clear, simple language in written materials	1
		Total: 24
Specialist support within Organisation	CN LitNum program within organisation	2
	internal literacy staff/volunteers	4
	workers training in Jenny Lamond Method	1
		Total: 7

3.4 *Youth worker's perceptions of the major barriers to supporting young people with literacy difficulties*

Three major barriers emerge from the data: the lack of youth worker literacy support skills; the lack of internal organisational resources to support young people with literacy difficulties and the lack of literacy course referrals that are considered to be appropriately designed for engaging young people.

Resistance by young people themselves to addressing their literacy difficulties is also acknowledged as a barrier. However, this category is perceived as the barrier that occurs less frequently and has less impact than the three most frequent barrier categories.

Table 5: *Youth Workers' Perceptions of the Major Barriers to Supporting Young People with Literacy Difficulties*

Categories	Sub Categories	Frequency
None		1
		Total: 1
Identification and/or assistance of young people with literacy difficulties	basic assessment skills for youth workers	16
	youth worker literacy training	13
		Total: 29
Access to appropriate referrals	access to young people 'friendly' literacy courses	17
	time frames of other agencies	2
	negative attitudes of teachers towards young people	2
		Total: 21
Lack of organisational resources	literacy not always the highest priority for existing human and financial resources	6
	access to tutors at youth centres	13
	lack of appropriate tools that are young people friendly	9
		Total: 28
Resistance by young people themselves	young people may not acknowledge the problem as important	6
	lack of transport or childcare	2
	high drop out rate of homeless and itinerant young people or young people from volatile home environments	4
		Total: 12

3.5 *Knowledge of local literacy referral pathways in local area*

Sixty-six percent of organisations indicated that they are aware of literacy support options available for referring young people, in their local area,. Table 6 also shows approximately thirty-three percent had little or no idea of local referral points.

Table 6: *Knowledge of Local Literacy Referral Pathways*

Categories	Sub Categories	Frequency
None/No idea		11
Not Enough Knowledge		3
Yes		27
		Total: 41

The local referral points outlined in Table 7 below shows a wide range of perceived literacy support options that involve both nationally recognised and non recognised sources of support. There were a significant number of general comments that suggested that not all the referral points available within the local area were considered appropriate for young people. Workers indicated that they would be reluctant to refer disadvantaged young people to some literacy support services. This also supports the data gathered in Table 5 which identifies lack of appropriate referral sources as a major barrier to assisting young people with literacy difficulties.

Table 7: *Types of Pathways Identified*

6	TAFE
1	local high school
2	local flexischools
3	literacy volunteers
1	organisation's own literacy worker
1	open learning courses
2	local community based organisations
1	JPET
1	YACCA
1	local vocational access course

This information also relates to the data in Table 4 which indicates that youth workers are more likely to consider literacy support solutions that take place within their own organisation.

Young people find it difficult in classes with adults

No real youth specific classes or alternate learning opportunities (in our area)

Need places appropriate to refer to that are friendly to young people

Need a specialised understanding of young people's issues and culture

Young people can achieve, just need to be taught in a different way to what is happening now

Young Women's Place helped TAFE teachers with setting up a more young women friendly environment

TAFE offers adult literacy but not for or aimed at young people

3.6 The need for youth workers to have skills for determining whether a young person has a literacy problem

Ninety-three percent of the respondents agreed with the need for youth workers to have skills for determining whether a young person has literacy difficulties. Overwhelmingly, organisations asserted that literacy support skills need to be readily available for youth workers :

...especially case workers and long term contact workers

In two of the thirty-eight cases, this agreement was qualified:

Yes, if it is part of the agencies' modus operandum

Helpful, but not a job requirement.

Three organisations indicated that youth workers did not need literacy support skills as part of their daily job role:

Not relevant to the job as it stands.

3.7 The level of literacy support skills needed by youth workers in their job roles

Again, ninety-three percent of the responses, indicated support for differing levels of literacy support skills to be available to workers to assist young people in their job roles within their daily job roles.

Fifty-six percent of responses advocated the need for basic assessment skills (and tools), with a specific youth focus, while thirty-six percent and thirty-four percent of responses advocated general information and tutoring skills respectively. A small number of responses (ten percent) indicated the need for literacy support skills, beyond tutoring skills. A small percentage of respondents did not know what level of literacy support would be necessary for youth workers.

Table 8: *Youth Workers' Perceptions of Literacy Competencies Needed to Complement Generalist Youth Work Competencies*

Categories	Sub Categories	Frequency
None	"can perform just as well as teachers"	1
		Total: 1
General Knowledge	general information surrounding young people and behaviours associated with literacy problems	8
	local referral sources and options	9
		Total: 15
Basic Identification & Assessment Skills, with a specific youth focus		23
		Total: 23

Tutoring Skills		14
		Total: 14
Advanced Literacy Skills		4
		Total: 4
Don't Know		2
		Total: 2

3.8 Knowledge of professional development opportunities for obtaining literacy support skills

It is clear from Table 9 below that the fifty-six percent of respondents had no knowledge of where professional development opportunities in the literacy field were available. The largest majority of those workers who did know where to look for assistance with literacy support skills identified local TAFE courses. Three organisations identified local tutoring courses not connected to a TAFE college.

Youth sector workers have been given little information or opportunity to encourage participation in the literacy support agenda.

Table 9: *Youth Workers' Knowledge of Professional Development Opportunities for Obtaining Literacy Support Skills*

Categories	Sub Categories	Frequency
None/No Idea		23
		Total: 23
Local TAFE		7
	Open Learning Institute	1
		Total: 8
Local Vounteer Tutoring courses		3
Books		1
Edith Cowan University		1
Internal in-service manual		1
YSTC		2
		Total: 8

4. Discussion

Sixty eight percent of the forty-one organisations participating in the investigation are currently involved in the identification and assessment of the literacy skills of young people who present at their agencies for agency support. While many organisations acknowledge that literacy support activities are not a primary role of the organisation nor a core business activity of their funded service agreements, a majority of youth workers are nevertheless currently incorporating informal literacy support skills into their daily job activities.

The depth of those literacy support roles varies across organisations to include: basic assessment activity; referral of young people to other organisations that have been identified as young people friendly; provision of adhoc, one-to-one support where possible; integration of literacy activities into core-business group activities and, in a small minority of organisations, proactively seeking or providing specialist literacy support within the organisation.

A majority of youth workers and community service organisations are already providing literacy assistance to disadvantaged young people whenever they can, within the boundaries of no allocated human or financial resources; a lack of nationally recognised literacy support skills and, in most cases, a limited knowledge of literacy frameworks, within which to place literacy support activities they are undertaking.

This raises the question: Why are youth workers taking on this role within their daily duties and, in most cases, with little or no additional organisational support? The data indicates that there are two major reasons for the present situation.

Primarily, youth workers are often the first, or in some cases, only point of contact for a substantial number of marginalised young people because of their primary role of providing personal support in a variety of wide-ranging circumstances.

> *Lee is a young single father and an incest survivor. He was not very good at school. He quit after two years of high school and left home at the same time. Lee managed to get some work as a service station attendant, but got the sack after a few weeks for not keeping the records of petrol sales straight.*
>
> *He came along to a meeting at the local youth centre for incest survivors. The youth worker noticed that although Lee contributed well to discussions in the meetings, he avoided writing.*
>
> A case study from " What's Wrong with Ya?' (1994:9)

A majority of these young people are those who would not present to most educational or vocational organisations without the support of a youth worker to facilitate the process:

Support includes taking them to the course the first time

Keeping in contact after referral increases the chance of young people keeping to their action plan

In order for a service organisation to provide assistance or referral to manage the needs of young people presenting to the service, young people need to fill out forms and understand a variety of written materials. Through these very processes of attending to core business activities, youth workers are placed in the position of assessing the reading, writing, oral communication and understanding skills of the young people with whom they work. In fact, it could be argued very strongly that assessing the functional literacy skills and young peoples' understanding of both written and oral materials is a core competency embedded within many youth workers' formal job roles. Even though a number of youth workers

indicated that it was not part of their job description, assessing levels of literacy competence and understanding of detailed information is a compulsory enabling skill for supporting young people to access further support.

The second reason is related to perceptions of the existing referral points to assist disadvantaged young people who are experiencing a variety of critical and non-critical personal issues, personal issues which will impact upon their success when attempting to overcome their literacy difficulties. The data have constantly shown, through both the tables presented and the general comments made, that organisations often do not believe that appropriate referral points are available within their local areas. A number of general comments from organisations in rural areas suggest that literacy referral points, as well as referral points for other different types of issues, are scarce.

Across all the regions, an underlying theme has been articulated which questions the appropriateness of the present structures of a large number of specialised literacy classes for assisting young people, particularly a select number of adult literacy classes within the TAFE system. The theme of providing literacy in an environment and within a learning structure that specifically meets the needs of disadvantaged young people also encompasses learning resources and assessment tools. The organisations perceived a lack of available literacy resources and tools that are specifically designed and presented in a way considered to be 'young people friendly'.

Many workers faced with limited referral options and limited appropriate resources are choosing to look within their own organisations to provide literacy support options for disadvantaged young people.

The challenge for the youth sector industry is to acknowledge the literacy support activities youth workers are currently performing, and to provide access to literacy support competencies appropriate to the expressed needs of the workers. Literacy training for youth workers needs to be included, as a matter of high priority, into State Training Profile financial projections.

The challenge for youth workers is to also acknowledge the literacy support activities many youth workers are currently performing. Individually or within the work team, youth workers need to ascertain the level of literacy support skills used or needed within the individual community service organisation. Where considered appropriate by the work team, community service agencies can then begin to develop action plans to access additional financial and human resource opportunities to meet those needs.

The challenge for the literacy field is to proactively reach out to youth sector organisations and their staff and work with them: either to develop programmes within their own youth sector organisation or to co-operatively design programmes within external organisations that will provide disadvantaged young people with the best possible chance of succeeding to overcome their literacy difficulties, once a personal commitment to learning has been negotiated.

The literacy field needs to foster a greater level of interaction than presently exists with *"target group community members in developing and delivering programs"* (ANTA, 1997); including input from both youth workers and marginalised young people and working collaboratively with both groups.

5. Conclusions

If, as the data have shown, a majority of Queensland youth workers are currently employing literacy assessment skills within the daily routines of their core business activities, then literacy support competencies need to be included within both the national youth competencies and the emerging community services training packages. National competency standards are developed to meet the vocational education and training needs of employees in industry sectors. The data have shown that literacy support skills are

- *necessary to complete ... work in a job role*
- *relevant to actual workplaces*

(ANTA, 1997:2)

and therefore, need to be included in the national standards at the time of the next revision.

Two additional units of competency need to be developed, in a joint venture with literacy field specialists, for inclusion into the youth work specialisation stream of the draft community services training packages and credentials. The units of competence would become optional youth work specialisation units accessed at the entry level points of AQF Level 3 and AQF Level 4.

The first unit of competence would cover information on issues affecting young people with literacy difficulties; current literacy frameworks for provision and reporting and basic literacy assessment strategies. The second unit of competence would encompasses existing literacy tutoring competencies, accessed from the literacy field.

The youth sector industry also needs to develop, in a joint venture with literacy field specialists, a set of youth specific and youth friendly literacy resources and assessment tools, for optional use within youth sector organisations.

The literacy field needs to assist youth workers with information of all available referral points by local area. This information needs to include regular, current listings of vocational and community literacy providers; local Department of Education support programmes, local library programmes and non-accredited literacy support within local organisations. This resource would enable the flexibility of wider choice for youth sector organisations to match young people into those programs which will give the most successful result to the individual young people needing additional literacy skills.

The key to youth sector participation in the literacy agenda is a series of cross- sectoral partnerships, providing a variety of literacy support options, operating both within and externally to community service organisations. These partnerships will have the potential to enable young people to access the most appropriate literacy support to meet their current educational and emotional needs. They will also enable youth workers to measure whether the informal literacy support currently being provided is effectively meeting the literacy needs of the young people with which they interact.

At the moment, those youth workers offering support to young people with literacy difficulties are 'flying blind' and many literacy specialists are not aware of the benefits for marginalised young people in working in a closer partnership with youth sector workers.

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Appendix 1: RESEARCH RESPONDENTS

1 Zig Zag
2 Young Mothers for Young Women
3 Youth Advocacy Centre
4 Youth and Family Services (JPET)
5 St Marys
6 Jabiru Community Youth and Children's Services Association
7 Gold Coast Youth Service
8 Gold Coast Drug Council
9 Gold Coast Project for Homeless Youth
10 Beenleigh Area Youth Service Association
11 Pine Rivers Youth Care Accommodation
12 Youth and Family Association - FISP
13 Sunshine Coast Youth and Family Services Inc
14 Noosa Youth Service
15 Gympie Skillshare
16 NAMTEC Gympie
17 HAPY
18 Teencare
19 Shop 101 Young People's Health
20 Harlaxton Neighbourhood Centre
21 Phonenix House Young People's Mental Health
22 Toowoomba Community Housing Service
23 Young Women's Place
24 Tara and District Family Support Centre
25 Winton Neighbourhood Centre
26 Cherbourg/Murgon YACCA
27 Youthcare Harvey Bay
28 South Burnett YD Network
29 Bundaberg YACCA
30 Bundaberg Area YSTC Inc
31 Monto Neighbourhood Centre
32 Centacare-Blackwater
33 Capricorn Youth Shelter - Jack's House
34 Girl's Time Out YWSS Inc
35 YACCA Mackay Inc
36 Sharehouse
37 Innisfail Youth Services Network
38 Youth Link (Cairns)
39 Rosie's Youth Mission (Cairns)
40 YACCA Mt Isa
41 Mt Isa Youth Shelter

Appendix 2: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE WITH LITERACY DIFFICULTIES

Contact Details

Name of Organisation: _____

Postal Address: _____

_____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Contact Person _____ Date: _____

Size of Organisation

No of Full-time workers with Young People: _____

No of Part-time workers with Young people: _____

No of Volunteer workers with Young People: _____

No of Young People Accessing organisation per month: _____

Survey Questions

1 During an average month, how many young people accessing your service or organisation would you recognise as experiencing literacy or numeracy difficulties, eg: have trouble filling out forms, taking or leaving messages, reading timetables or medicine bottles, telling the time, finding names and addresses in a phone book, or, self identify as having difficulties with reading, writing, maths?

☐ 0 ☐ 1-5 ☐ 5-10 ☐ more than 10

2 What strategies do you or your organisation have in place for identifying young people with literacy and/or numeracy difficulties?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3 What literacy help (if any) do you, or your organisation, offer young people with literacy difficulties.

4 What do you think are the major barriers youth workers face in supporting young people with literacy and numeracy difficulties, eg: personal, organisational, professional, skills, etc.

5 Are there referral pathways in your area to help young people with literacy and numeracy issues?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ No Idea

6 Do you think youth workers need skills for determining whether a young person may have a literacy or numeracy problem ?

☐ Yes ☐ No

7 What level of professional skills do you think youth workers need to help young people with literacy and numeracy issues?
Comment(s):

8 What university, accredited training or professional development opportunities are you aware of for providing literacy helping skills for youth workers?
Comment(s)

9 General Comments (Literacy and Numeracy Issues)

10 General Sector Comments

Chapter

6

Literacy and Numeracy skills of truants and underage school leavers

Irena Morgan-Williams

Evolution and framing of the project

Background to the study

The research study is the consequence of the identification by a private provider of several co-existing factors relating to the situation and the status of young people not in schooling nor the permanent workforce. It is motivated particularly by the announcement of certain changes which will occur in relation to these matters after the introduction of the common Youth Allowance in 1999.

At the present, Commonwealth government policy on youth has identified a climate of erosion of quality in both educational and life style outcomes for certain "at risk" groups *(Skills for Australia, 1986, Australia's Language and Literacy 1991, Mayer Report 1992, Working Nation, 1994 and New Work Opportunities, 1995).* Consequently it has focused upon key questions and problems like the rising youth suicide rate, increasing percentages of school truancy from years 7 to 10, patterns of increasing playground violence and behaviour management problems within school environments and the growth in substance abuse among the young, sometimes on or adjacent to school premises.

In recognising the increasing incidence of youth unemployment *(ABS Census Statistics, 1991),* job restructuring which has in effect abolished a whole category or semi- and unskilled work which may in the past have been the province of youth who left school early with marginally developed skills *(Turning the key: Meeting the literacy needs of youth at risk, 1991),* smaller numbers of young people accessing lower numbers of apprenticeships and an apparent community perception of significantly growing social and actual illiteracy and poor numeracy and oral skills *(Literacy for Labour Market Programs, 1993),* the Commonwealth has understandably developed a view that these factors have profound consequences socially and economically and hence politically. In the light of this belief the Commonwealth has developed certain innovative programs like the Youth Development Program (Prevention) and the Youth Homelessness Pilot Project to deal with aspects of these larger issues. However it was known to the provider that currently there is little or no provision to examine the language, literacy and numeracy needs of the client group found

to be truanting in growing numbers between years 7 to 10. Nor is there any provision made to study, report on or accommodate these needs during or following their periods of non-attendance.

Co-existing with this view is another among educational policy makers which aligns literacy and numeracy with increased chances of employability *(Black, 1996)*. The implied goal of employment then becomes one of greater social cohesion *(Freebody, 1995)* as one remedy against the inherent evils which the above factors are felt to establish. The coincidence of all these factors has been seen to constitute a warning that the needs and interests of young persons at risk of any, or several, of these factors must be more clearly and accurately addressed in the cause of economic and social progress for this section of the community.

Local Context

It is a matter of historical record that within the local area of the provider (ie Redcliffe City and hinterland to Deception Bay) the introduction of the New Apprenticeship Access Program (NAAP) has indicated a substantial number of young people who have had periods of 'lost' school experience which does not chronologically relate to the period since they 'officially' left the schooling system. These are the young people who will never be eligible for NAAP because they do not have AQF level 1 and 2 or Year 10 Sound Achievement. Apart from other obvious causes like ethnic background and disability, persistent interrupted schooling and premature school leaving are other likely reasons for limited educational achievement. When it became apparent that these lost periods amounted to a significant percentage of the schooling of young persons "at risk", it became a key task to identify where these 'missing' students could be located and what remediation if any was possible, given their circumstances. The difficulties of accurately identifying all these individuals when so many do not necessarily appear on official school records will be explained later in this chapter.

The task was made more urgent by the announcement that in order to qualify for the Youth Allowance in 1999, young people aged 15-18 years needed to be in full time attendance at schools before they were eligible for payment of benefit. If these students already had a pattern of established truancy and were able to take advantage of the current legislation in relation to the period of school attendance, or were simply not able to be 'captured' by the existent recording systems of the schools, then forcing their attendance at schools, where they had always been unwanted, unwelcomed and not provided for (in terms of programs tailored to their specific needs) would have potentially disastrous consequences for whole school environments, that is for teachers, administrators, fellow students, these individuals themselves and the providers of infrastructure support.

Canvassing the local High School and cross referencing their truancy records with the feeder primary schools established evidence that there was a significant group of young people in the local area who were persistent truants and still others whose pattern of school attendance had led to a de facto outcome of early school leaving. These figures were confirmed by community providers like the Police and Citizens Youth Club (PCYC) and Youth and Combined Community Action (YACCA) who confirmed the existence of this group as sometime users of community and recreational services. It also gave rise to the belief that a significant factor in the whole dilemma of these students was a deficit in both literacy and numeracy competence, a generally low level of social skill and inability to articulate the actual nature of distress especially with the schooling system, pointing to both poor social and oral skills *(ACER: Reading and numeracy in Junior Secondary schools: Trends, patterns and consequences, 1995)*. The implication clearly was that, as for failing adults, the

consequences for the individuals would be far reaching in terms of lowered self esteem, truncation of life outcomes like the chance for a comprehensive education, social interaction as equal and respected members of a peer group/coterie, interaction with adults and other role models within the educational community, reasonable jobs and all manner of attendant life style choices.

All these factors being apparent, it was clear to the provider that the establishment of ACTEA (Adult Community Training and Education Association) at Deception Bay constituted a unique opportunity to design a survey instrument to test the hypotheses that literacy and numeracy problems were embedded in the difficulties of young people persistently truanting and leaving school early. Further, that elicitation of students' views about circumstances related to their inability to be accommodated by current educational programs may lead to some recommendations about alternatives for dealing with these questions.

Demographic material was researched which gave some benchmarks for the likely extent of the problem which then enabled a reasonable projection of the likely impact of the issue of truancy on schooling and learning experience. Population demographics also revealed what was anecdotally well known of the Redcliffe Peninsula, namely that it was a site of high youth unemployment, in general low socioeconomic status especially in the Deception Bay hinterland, relatively high public housing levels, limited public transport and lower than the State's average vehicle ownership but higher than the State's average unemployment.

Background Demographics

Redcliffe City and Deception Bay are located approximately 30 km north east of Brisbane and accessed via either a long bridge over the peninsula isthmus (single lane both ways) or by a circuitous inland route which adds 8 km to the journey to Deception Bay. Transport is in the form of one only quite expensive private bus line to the railhead (public transport usage has fallen 11.9% in the past two years as prices have risen 12% over the period) or private taxi. The level of private vehicle ownership is only just over half the State's average although this is the preferred method of travel. *(Statistics 1991 Census, Australian Bureau of Statistics).*

The population of Redcliffe is 48,026 *(Statistics 1997 Census, ABS)* at the last population census and the city is growing at a rate two thirds below the State average of 15.15%. Of these persons 2,596 (20.2%) are aged 15-18 years which also is slightly below the State average of 22.6%. Population statistics reveal both stagnant growth in the city and a characteristically aging population. The survey records that the population is overwhelmingly of British descent but 1.7% of the population stated their ethnic origin as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. However, since many individuals for various reasons do not register identification with these groups, the incidence is liable to be much higher. For similar reasons, the 3.9% who self-report as 'not speaking English well' may also be an understatement. Since the population of Deception Bay is shared between the City of Redcliffe and the Shire of Caboolture, it is more difficult to accurately determine exact populations. However by a process of best estimates, it is known that part of the population within the latter district was growing at a rate 47.3% *(ABS Statistics 1991).*

In terms of educational qualification both Redcliffe and Deception Bay are characteristically slightly above the State average of what the ABS describes as persons 'without educational qualification' (66.7% and 66.2% compared with 63.6%). In both cases only approximately 3.2% of people had a degree compared to the State average of 6.0%.

Income distribution is similar in both Redcliffe and Deception Bay in that both areas

incorporate a higher than average incidence of low income earners, ie less than $16000 per year (48.9% in Redcliffe and 52.9% in Deception Bay as compared with a State average of 40.6% under $20 000 per year). Those higher income earners who do earn in excess of $30 000 per year are still only 8.8% compared with the State average of 12.6%. Coupled with these statistics is the larger than usual number of single parent families in public housing.

At the 1991 census, Redcliffe had 16,906 persons in employment, 68% in full time jobs and 28% employed part time. Figures are not yet available on this statistic for 1997. However in 1991, the unemployment rate of 14.8% was significantly higher than the State average of 11.3%. The unemployment and participation rates for males were slightly worse than for females and at all age levels. For youth aged between 15-19 years of both sexes the unemployment rate was 25.2%, higher than the Queensland average of 22.0%. This was predicted to rise another 2.5% within the next two year period. Further, of the employed youth only 50.0% were in full time jobs. Clearly their alternative was continued retention at school.

At the time of the last ABS census, Deception Bay High School was not functioning as a full High School across years 8-12, so no figures are available from the census for that spread of classes. However the trend in Redcliffe, at that time, was for a slight fall off in high school enrolments and a subsequent increase in private school enrolments. The limited figures available for Deception Bay indicate a 177% growth between its first and second year of operation but it was however a new high school, the first in the local area and fed by three primary schools. The school is now a comprehensive High School with enrolments to Year 12 and maintaining steady growth.

Project outcomes

Project outcomes were developed in respect of the needs, concerns and interests of the various stakeholders as they were expressed during collaborative stakeholder interviews and presented as part of the funding brief to Language Australia. Briefly these were:-

PCYC	collate information and develop a case study report to inform future strategies to recruit young people to the recreational and computer centre.
YACCA	develop a case study report to illuminate current and past behaviours of clients and inform the support and counselling strategies for this group.
SCHOOLS	develop a report from the case studies which focused on the barriers that a lack of literacy/numeracy skills sets up and the types of behaviour that are symptoms of such barriers.
LANGUAGE AUSTRALIA	reinforce by a report the surveys and anecdotal evidence that a lack of "being literate" can have far reaching social and economic consequences.

In addition to these elaborated stakeholders, it became apparent particularly during the conduct of the home interview phase of the project that parents both were and saw themselves as stakeholders in this project. They were often at a complete loss to understand truanting behaviour and certainly in need of advice and strategies about how to confront the issue and perhaps arrive at some understanding of causes and effect some changes.

Finally ACTEA itself found that it needed a section of the report to explicate the kinds of programs of interest or benefit to this group which were able to be offered within informal or alternative learning environments.

Sample size and composition of the survey

The fifteen students comprising twelve registered school students and three post school age early school leavers were drawn subject to strict confidentiality procedures from the registration lists of current enrollees at Deception Bay High School. All the former interviewees had come to the attention of the school for non-attendance either because of voluntary but illegitimate absences or because of suspension or other disciplinary reasons.

The interviewer, in the course of interviews with these individuals, was given many extra names and details about other 'absconders' in that particular coterie who were clearly unknown to the school and therefore not recorded. These were often older or younger siblings or relatives, as well as friends, but the most instructive point is that the student was either completely unknown to the school, or vaguely known by repute, but not directly recorded.

In the light of this, the provider has formed the view that although the issues and concerns raised by interviewing the subjects were in fact a truly representative sample of these issues and concerns, the group itself may have been somewhat idiosyncratic, rather than representational, in the sense that the more common outcome for the school truant is to go undetected and therefore escape attempts at intervention. In short, many of these students are often quite unknown by schools; rather they are noticed by community providers who deal with their time out from school and other physical and infrastructure support issues. If known to the school, severe behavioural problems often marked out these students for a semi-permanent state of suspension.

The problem is also disguised, and minimised, by a high degree of apparent collusion from parents and friends or relatives who, even when aware of the problem, still enable these students to spend a large amount of their 'lost' school time in familial surroundings. For our purposes, the issues raised were real and represented the issues with schooling and self-perception which cause young people to persistently truant and drop out of school early. But the group was non-representational in that it was quite clearly known and recognised as the tip of an iceberg of otherwise unknown proportions.

The survey instrument (see Appendix 1) was more than just an assessment of literacy and numeracy tasks. It was also an opportunity for the interviewer to elicit the students' perceptions about several key issues relating to their sense of success or failure in the whole school and learning environment and the efforts undertaken by schools and teachers to develop or counter these perceptions. In addition it established a rough sociometric diagram of how those student saw themselves positioned within the peer group and gave some valuable insight into the level of self-worth and self-esteem they ascribed to themselves. As has already been alluded to, it offered an interesting insight into the amount of apparent collusion with truanting behaviour offered by families and friends.

The home based interview was offered at first as a matter of necessity. As these students were for the major part under school leaving age, minors, and not readily accessible at 'hidden' locations during school hours, the easiest and most reliable way of locating them to arrange interviews to follow up, was to conduct them at their home address. It proved to be a very valuable exercise in that it revealed the unintended sequel which was that the parents who were frequently in attendance were stakeholders and concerned parties in their own right and as part of the interview process revealed issues and concerns which were unique and valuable. Often glimpses into the family constellation and home circumstances were a unique window of insight into some of the factors which predicated learning difficulties and these factors may not have been revealed in any other way.

The surveys and interview material were then collated and developed as a set of descriptive case studies which highlighted a number of general features which were common to this particular group and their families. From these, a set of recommendations was developed which particularly focused on the stakeholders' needs which had been identified.

Case Studies

Case study 1

"Kellie" was a fourteen year old Year 10 student living with her mother and a known elder sister. Her mother feels that she needs to have her own life and cannot supervise Kellie all the time but fails to see that treating her to outings during her periods of non-attendance might be interpreted as a reward for not going to school. During the time taken trying to organise interviews and surveys, Kellie spent "a couple of days out of school with friends" arranged by her mother and over two weeks with a relative in Rockhampton. Certainly, in the latter case, Kellie had not told the school where she would be and neither had her mother, although she reported that the school was always "on to her" when Kellie was absent. In all, Kellie had only put in one full week at school for the six weeks of term. 'Kellie's' house was full of other children of various ages, siblings and step siblings in an atmosphere which during the period of the interview could be described as boisterous, even chaotic.

In completing the survey, Kellie reported that she did not want to leave school now although she eventually hoped to get a job. She found school boring and was expecting that the teachers, whom she found to be very strict, would expel her for truancy. She also felt that the teachers required her to do far too much work and reported that she had never been offered any special or extra assistance although she only "sort of" coped with her school work.

Asked how she felt her friends saw her she said "Funny, naughty". She had no apparent difficulty completing the literacy and numeracy exercises making only one small error in the latter and, despite a paucity of colour and innovation in her text, her spelling and handwriting were both good and quite clear. Nothing was revealed, however, of her personality or any reason for the development of her difficulties with school. Kellie's picture will be discussed as will all others in a separate section.

Case study 2

"Lisa" was a fourteen year old Year 10 student who at the time of interview had in fact been attending school for three consistent weeks. She lived with her father, her disabled brother and another older brother who worked, her mother having left the family home. Her father had barred her from keeping company with Kellie. He was also very interested and personally warm with her and encouraging about her participation, perhaps even to the extent that some of her answers may have been a little 'forced'. Her picture perhaps also reflects this subtle pressure. When she was absent from school she did not hang around home but rather went to friends or went out walking.

In completing the survey Lisa's spelling and handwriting were clear and good although her text was minimal and revealed almost nothing of herself. She was conscientious but took a long time to complete the numbers task making two errors in the process. She reported that she had no difficulty coping with school work and had not received extra help in class. She stated that school was boring although she was not thinking of leaving. She did not like any of her teachers because they "were always cranky at something". Her friends saw her as "friendly, nice and smart" she stated.

Case study 3

"Nell" was a Year 9 Aboriginal student aged fourteen who has a pattern of not only truancy but "getting into trouble" (unspecified) during her periods of non-attendance. This has meant not only has she been shifted extensively around the extended family but that she has experienced considerable short term relocations between schools, States and locations in States. When not at school she is frequently at her 'grandmothers' where three other male truants live. She has been allowed back to the High School on hourly reporting but her guardian relates that since making a few friends "she is getting out of hand again". At the home interview her male guardian was in attendance in a state of obvious intoxication whilst Nell herself was subdued and amenable, concerned if she made a mistake.

In completing the survey, Nell reported that she "didn't like school sometimes" though she gave no reason and said that she received extra help with Maths, English and Social Sciences. She made no comment about her teachers and when asked how school made her feel she clearly did not understand the question and reported that "sometimes her friends made her go to school with them" although how she felt about this and the school experience as a result was left unsaid. She doesn't want to leave school but eventually wants to get a job. However, her guardian told the interviewer that she told Nell that she cannot expect to do that without proper schooling.

Nell's handwriting though very childish was clear. She made no spelling mistakes and did the numbers test with only one small error but her text was minimal and revealed absolutely nothing of herself. When asked how her friends saw her she said "at school and home", perhaps indicating some miscomprehension of the emphasis of the question.

Case study 4

"Noela" was a fourteen year old Year 10 student living with her mother and stepfather and two sisters, the eldest of whom the parents reported was a "model student". Her parents reported (as did Lisa's) that Noela's problems began in real earnest after she met up with Kellie because Kellie is unsupervised. The move from Redcliffe High to Deception Bay High is also partially responsible for Noela's change in attitude according to her parents. Her parents were very anxious that these factors be known, asked for feedback on Noela's personal situation and the survey. They also requested that parents be added as stakeholders in their own right. The interviewer agreed to this.

In completing the survey Noela was very quiet and cooperative although her artwork perhaps reflects a subtle response to a pressure to reproduce what she thought her parents may want to see. Of all respondents her text was simple clear and meaningful and expressive of more complex ideas and emotional states. She said she coped with school work and received extra help with Maths and Science. School often bored her and "you don't learn anything" and she didn't like some subjects but she said that lately she felt better about school after extra help because now she "understand(s) the work ..... Before I felt dum (sic)". Of all respondents she was most articulate about her after school plans for TAFE and had a view on the reasons why she liked certain pop music. She also felt that her friends saw her as "a kind person, easy to talk to". Her writing was clear and she made two only small errors in the ordering and numbers task.

Case study 5

"Edgar" was a Year 9 Aboriginal student aged fourteen who lived with his guardian and various other people. In the last eight months he had attended school for four days only and according to the school was "mixing with the wrong sort out of school hours". When he was not at school during the day he simply stayed home; instead of being at school he saw himself playing football or cleaning the house. Whilst he said he had given thought as to how he might support himself, he still did not know whether his guardian would allow him to stay at home or how "they" expected him to spend his time or what his friends thought of him. He "hated school" but no reason was given nor any other feelings about teachers, etc.

In completing the survey his writing was very babyish and the text was minimal with absolutely no insight given into his personality. He could not accurately count the days from a given date to another, could complete the public holiday ordering task but not the page-numbering task. He offered no responses at all to the reading task identifying pop music. He did not attempt the drawing exercise.

Case study 6

"Cliff" is a Year 9 Aboriginal student aged thirteen who lives with a female guardian and spends a lot of time with his 'grandmother'. He is best described as unable to read or write and has attended school three hours in the last six weeks. He is also a client of the Juvenile Justice Service. The interviewer completed some parts of his survey for him and took him to ACTEA to see the centre when he and his female guardian expressed keenness in getting him back into some schooling. He expressed initial enthusiasm but when Monday came and he was expected at the centre, he failed to present. His home was full of various kids of all ages, watching TV and babysitting. Even trying to convey verbal instructions to the interviewer about how she should fill out the questions, he could not complete any of the tasks but did make an attempt at a piece of artwork about school.

Case study 7

"Dennis" lives with his mother in impoverished and poorly organised domestic circumstances. Nonetheless his mother is undoubtedly caring and warm towards him, reflected in Dennis's air of maturity. His mother expressed eagerness to get Dennis some help. All showed an interest in ACTEA and Dennis said he would visit the next day. He didn't attend the next day but has subsequently shown up.

In completing the survey Dennis said that he could cope with Maths, English, Wood and "melte" (metal) work without any offer of extra help but that he was nearly always away from school because it "is very boring. it sux (sic)". This was the main reason he stayed away from school, adding, "(he) need(s) more enthiete (sic)". Possibly 'enthusiasm'? His handwriting and spelling were very poor although he had no difficulty with the numbering and ordering tasks. He drew quite complex artwork and had a view about what he found enjoyable in pop music. He did not know how his friends saw him but when he wasn't in school, he did not report hanging around home but went out swimming. He did not find other people or places supportive.

Case study 8

"David" is a Year 9 student aged fourteen but of extremely small stature. He lives with his parents in a very pleasant domestic environment but also in the household is a sixteen year old brother who has rarely attended school since year 8 and appears to be unemployed. His mother seemed particularly helpless in the face of both boys' reluctance to attend school and allows David to remain at home from school up three days per week. David seemed to have great difficulty completing all tasks, even his handwriting being almost infantile and his artwork painful and incomplete. He described himself as "a funny kid".

In completing the survey David exhibited extremely low literacy and numeracy skills but only receives extra help with English. In the date ordering task for instance he ordered the dates numerically but paid no attention to the order of the months which was the real purpose. Although he said he did not like school, paradoxically he felt it "helps me loun (sic)". He was not thinking of leaving school and did not attempt any questions in the section on after school plans. When not at school he stayed home and found that his friends were supportive (once the term was explained to him) as "they tell me things".

Case study 9

"Lindsay" was a Year 9 student aged fourteen who lives with his mother and step father in very pleasant domestic circumstances. He has actually been attending school quite consistently this year and his mother felt that some of his truancy related to the bad influence of another truanting student with other problems who lived over the road but who has since left the neighbourhood. When he had been truanting he simply said he'd "wag or go home". His mother was actually a little over protective during the survey completion phase but this could perhaps be explained in terms of Lindsay's real difficulties with reading in particular.

In completing the survey, Lindsay said that he did, in general, cope with school work despite no special extra attention and actually felt that the teachers as well as his friends were supportive as they gave him enough help in class. In general, he was quite positive about the whole school environment.

He had difficulty reading the instructions for the date-ordering exercise but completed it without error when the instruction was rewritten. He also completed the page-ordering task without mistakes but could not comprehend or attempt the task on pop music. His sociometric ordering task also had a heavy input of his own spoken clarifications. His artwork also reflected the fact of his mother's close interest and may be an attempt to reproduce a pleasing 'lesson' for her benefit.

Case study 10

"Justin" was a fourteen year old Year 8 student who is under medical treatment for behavioural problems. He lives with his mother who, despite a claim to a social network which interprets for her, is illiterate. Two of the three siblings with whom he lives are also experiencing some degree of learning and behavioural difficulty. He had not been to school all year after a relocation from interstate although the school will have him back after last year's suspension. His mother voluntarily approached ACTEA for assistance with home schooling. At the home interview it is likely that she had consumed alcohol. Justin received additional assistance at school with his English.

In completing the survey Justin indicated that on average he had missed at least two days a week off school and that there was absolutely nothing about it which he liked. He did not know what his friends thought of him but felt that staying at home all day as his alternative to school was just as boring. He could do the date ordering exercise although he

made many mistakes with the page-numbering task. His artwork was both detailed and imaginative and open to interpretation on several levels.

Case study 11

"Rory" was a fourteen year old Year 10 student who was interviewed at ACTEA. He did indicate however that he truanted every day and spent his time swimming. He felt he coped with school work without any special attention but that he wanted to leave to get a job.

In completing the survey instrument Rory used difficult spelling and words which conveyed complex feeling states about feeling sick at school, but 'curious' about learning, quite correctly. He made several mistakes in the page-numbering task but no other significant mistakes. His art was extraordinarily detailed and keenly observed and he said he "liked video hits".

Case study 12

"Sean" was a fifteen year old Year 10 student who was interviewed at ACTEA. He received no extra help at school and felt that he did not really cope with the work although he did not want to leave school now. His mates helped by being supportive but he did not self-report the incidence of his truancy.

In completing the survey Sean's writing was very babyish and minimal in content. He could not count correctly from the date of interview to a date in the future but he completed the date and page-ordering tasks without mistakes. He did not even attempt the writing task on pop music but his artwork was detailed if highly ambiguous.

Case study 13

"Wes" was a sixteen year old early school leaver who happened to be on the premises when "Charlie" and others were being interviewed and with the assistance of his partner expressed interest in completing the survey. In the light of his marital situation no home interview was undertaken.

In completing the survey Wes showed the barest level of skill and relied heavily on his partner. He was unemployed and because he was no longer in school spent his time with his partner and child. He hated school although he states that he completed Year 10 and felt his friends saw him as a nice bloke. He could not write the date ordering exercise though he could correctly circle the numbers on the calendar and made several mistakes on the page-ordering task. He did not do any artwork.

Case study 14 and 15

These two seventeen year old early school leavers agreed to participate in the survey when the interviewer accidentally encountered them at the PCYC premises.

"Bob" at seventeen had completed Year 10 but stated that he had persistently truanted at least once a week and although he had received special help with his Maths, said that the reason he disliked school and was absent was that the teachers "think they own you". He went to TAFE and thought his friends saw him as "OK". He could not do the date-ordering exercise and became so frustrated with the page-numbering task that he gave up after a struggle. Nor could he work out the sociometric diagram-making exercise although he did do a very simplistic artwork expressive of his view of school as imprisonment.

"Seth" on the other hand felt that he had been able to cope with school with the extra help he received in English and was currently undertaking a part time TAFE course. This is despite the fact that he stated that he felt that school held nothing for "(me) in the future".

His objective was "to get work and stay in a job" and he thought his friends all saw him differently according to their own views and indicated that there was nothing he could do to influence their view of him. He completed the date-ordering and page-numbering tasks perfectly and made a reasonable attempt at the sociometric diagram and did some artwork.

Common factors from case studies

Despite the obvious differences in such a coterie of clients, it was possible for the interviewer in collating the survey results to identify a set of features which were common to all the participants learning. These are briefly summarised below and whilst in some instances there are inferences drawn from the interviews and surveys, they corroborate other research findings or the explicitly stated evidence of other interviewees in this survey.

1. The home environment, the parent or guardians' level of education and practical as well as philosophical commitment to education itself, are crucial for learning outcomes, the effective management of truanting behaviour and a desire to leave school too early. Where parents are unconvinced that the task of the student is first and foremost to attend school (for example, as opposed to assuming family responsibilities or simply superintending their own living) and do not either establish a pattern of regular school attendance in primary school or re establish one which temporarily has been derailed by passing peer group influence, it is too difficult for the student alone to take on this responsibility.
2. Related to this first point is socio-economic status. It is too hard for a student who is supplementing limited family income by providing cheap childcare or domestic services and may incidentally be involved in whole family anxiety about chronic unemployment and low income for necessities, to be fully committed to schooling. Expecting such students to be behave in the middle class manner of delayed consumer gratification until the end of period of protracted education and training is also quite unrealistic.
3. Lack of success at school is a good predictor of truanting and forced early school leaving but so, also, is being the target of peer group pressure, bullying, being obviously much older, younger or physically 'different' from the peer group, having trouble with school and other authorities. Other predictors are: behavioural difficulties, family break up and physical relocation and problems with parents and other siblings .
4. Students in this group see school in terms ranging from the equivalent of imprisonment to a site of forced (hence irrelevant) learning. They see school as the sole and the formal site of learning. They do not see the support they receive from friends, relatives or even extra help from teachers as 'learning' (as opposed to schooling). Non-formal learning environments are poorly identified, as these students perceive that school alone is where it all is supposed to happen. Where for various reasons this has proved unsuccessful in the past, the schooling system, the teachers, but most of all the students themselves, are perceived as failures and only with extreme reluctance can they be persuaded to try again in another less formal environment. Even after expressing some initial enthusiasm they often have little longer term enthusiasm or motivation. Whilst even students with relatively good literacy reported almost universally that school was boring, the ability to hang around home with parental collusion did not appear to be much more satisfactory or stimulating. These students in fact have very few and limited 'other' places to go.
5. Despite the fact that many of these students were actually being offered and receiving extra help, because their difficulties had been at least partially correctly identified within the system, not one reported any level of inspiration either with a single element of the curriculum or even identification with an inspirational teacher. This is not to suggest that such teachers and curricula were not being offered, merely that once the student was

established in a negative mindset, the psychology was all inclusive: nothing was good about school or teachers, hence schooling was irrelevant and without value for life. This view was well established among a group who knew each other well and identified with each other's negativity. Alongside this attitude they developed a pattern of continuous negative reinforcement and developed stereotypes of teachers, teacher behaviour and expectations, and teacher behaviour management practices, which were often unreflective but almost always negative. This only changed where, by dint of parental pressure, extra help at school and removal from some peer influence, the student did actually experience some success with educational programs. They were then able to regain some faith in the pleasure of successful and, in their terms, relevant learning outcomes, precipitated by a belief in their own mastery and self-esteem.

6. The obvious corollary of the point above is that there must exist the will to conduct educational programs which offer real alternatives for students who have these negative attitudes to school, and hence, to learning itself. In the current political and educational climate, this amounts first to a realisation that the 'return to basics' movement in literacy provision for primary school level children does nothing to address the needs of this group even if the testing procedures correctly identified the base level of their literacy and numeracy skills. Second, the funding dollars which are being streamed into these primary level programs do not take cognisance of the fact that early school leavers are not effectively provided for in schooling programs which impose the unacceptable standards of school style behaviour which may have been a factor in truancy in the first place. Once students have persisted in truancy for a period and have even been forced out of school altogether by it, they are no longer effectively 'children' although they may have no more effective skills or greater literacy and life experience than relatively young children. Funding, and the political and educational will to capture and accommodate this group must be forthcoming at a policy making and administrative level so that real alternatives can be offered to students and overburdened schools when initiatives like the Common Youth Allowance are introduced.
7. The government focus on the linkage between literacy and numeracy and increased chances of employment, in this case for youth, whilst it may be legitimate, should not ignore or minimise the very real issues of development of a strong personality and right to self-expression, personal growth and widened life choices which literacy represents to this group. These students as a group were painfully inarticulate and hence unable to reflect upon their underpriviledged status much less make inroads into it. For them, low levels of literacy and numeracy also meant low levels of oral skill and little ability to articulate their distress at any level but particularly within the context of schooling and their personal and educational needs. In many cases where these students described themselves as either 'funny', 'nice', 'easy to talk to', or even 'naughty', they maybe did so with a sense of being the victim who could be dumped on by more powerful friends. They were listeners who had no choices and little else to fill up the day, unpaid babysitters, housekeepers and parent minders, butts of humour whose good nature was in not having any choice but to accept the status quo or else earn a reputation if at all for showing strength of character as a leader in poor behaviour. The long term consequences of these feelings of low self-worth can only be speculated upon but they are not healthy feelings per se.
8. Aboriginal students or those where disability in the family was an issue had even more difficulties to resolve relating to the cultural specificity of the belief in the power of education and the level of the parents' ability to remain focused on the importance of continuous schooling to educational outcomes and, in the long term, to optimise life chances.
9. There were definite attempts made to recapture students who the school perceived as voluntarily restricting their own access to educational programs and thence to longer

term options. However, where these are not pursued rigorously enough (no matter for what palpably 'good' reason like lack of time, personnel resources, inadequate recording systems or the like) the restriction of these, the most vulnerable students' chances for a meaningful and effective education, raises profound questions like equality of access to education and equity in offering educational opportunity to all comers. All students have an equal right to proper treatment under the charter of free universal education regardless of race, colour, ability or economic status and tacitly giving up on truanting students, whatever ostensibly good reason is offered, is a betrayal of their equality of opportunity. Expulsion for misdemeanours amongst this group, petty infringements which are often accumulated and seen as a final straw on top of a pattern of truanting which has to be monitored in personnel resource efforts which are both expensive in personnel hours and unpopular, is merely a shallow and counter productive strategy which will ultimately rebound on schools when all these students are forced back into the system to access Youth Allowance payments.

10. The artwork of this group (See Appendix B) provide them with an opportunity to express deeper feelings which were difficult to express in other ways given the low ability of the group to articulate feelings in text formats. In all but three cases this opportunity was taken up. The ensuing result was a very mixed bag but they fell with surprising consistency into three categories:

    The first was a 'straight', simplistic, although detailed and imaginative, rendering of the route to school, the physical environment and so on; what could briefly and perhaps simplistically but realistically described as "infotell" which reveal little but the graphical skill and eye for detail of the artist.

    The second group could (again simplistically but realistically) be described as the "polemicists", ie those students who either responded to the subtle pressure of the expectations of their parents or the interviewer in attendance and reproduced what they thought might be what those people would want to see. In most cases it was an attempt at drawing a moral lesson about their own circumstances as a warning about the 'evils' of being a truant or the value of schooling. These artworks were valuable only in the sense that they revealed both these subtle pressures on that particular group of students and their desire to 'please' the authority figure and also how far the lessons about truancy and schooling had actually been internalised by this group.

    The final group were the most 'interesting' in the sense that their artwork really did reveal what they actually felt about the stifling boredom, repetitiveness and sense of failure which their schooling represented in their lives. This was expressed honestly regardless of the presence of the parent or the interviewer and was a vital clue to the emotional state which all this negativity must engender in their lives. It must also deeply influence the daily decision they must have to make about whether to subject themselves to it all over again, faced as they are with the paucity of alternative venues.

Recommendations

Parents

Despite straightened economic times, students do not bear an equivalent responsibility with their parents or guardians to provide a living family income. Austudy and other benefits like Youth Allowances should be secured for these students as the economic contribution to the family to reimburse some of the costs for the students' education. Unpaid babysitting, domestic services, keeping house with unemployed parents who have a multitude of needs for company and support are not substitutes for the primary task of gaining an education. If parents persist in the practice of tacit collusion with truanting behaviour to the point where de facto the student is forced to a point of premature exit from school, regardless of the cultural or class differences which parents quite rightly identify, they may ultimately be condemning the student to a lifetime of lost opportunity which has so restricted their own progress and choices.

Parents must support the ethos of schooling and education if any of the school's efforts to accommodate reluctant learners are to bear fruit. In general, so little effort is actually made for the size of the problem and lack of well-funded alternative resources that, if the crucial family support is lacking, all other alternatives are doomed to failure because of the negative perceptions of this group and their ability to find 'shelter' in a collusive home environment. The consequences for schools to provide parent training and education programs to explain and gather parental support for their purposes will be elaborated elsewhere.

Parents are stakeholders in their own right in the problems of truanting students and as such have a right to agitate at schools where conventional programs seem fail to address the problem. This consumer behaviour though is qualitatively different from complete passivity or helplessness in the face of the student's reluctance to attend school.

Finally, by developing in their students a plethora of survival skills adapted from all sorts of positive life experience, parents are helping them see learning as a holistic entity, sited at all the interchanges in life and not merely to be found in schooling. Given an attitude that many environments are learning sites despite, for whatever reason, schooling proves disappointing or unfruitful as it is wont to do for all students at all times (but none more so than students with low literacy and numeracy skills and other records of school related difficulty), the student may be able to draw on other experiences of successful learning and conceive of the possibility that other alternatives may work better provided their motivation remains alive.

Summary

Key issues for parents:-

1. The task of the under school leaving age student is acquisition of learning through attendance at school. The task of the parent is to keep them there for the period of compulsory school attendance.
2. Learning occurs everywhere and is helped by positive attitudes and good self-esteem so the role of the parent is constantly to offer and reinforce successful learning in sites other than at school and develop a sense of self-worth in their student regardless of academic ability.
3. Students cannot supplement inadequate social, life and income generating skills at the same level as their parents; thus they should not be expected to.
4. Colluding in students' truancy by letting them repeatedly stay at home, without real reasons, can be interpreted as a reward for this behaviour.

5. Parents have a right to be concerned and agitate for programs and teaching which meets the student's needs rather than exacerbates their problems or worse sweeps the problem and ultimately the student under the carpet and then out the back door.
6. Helpless passivity in the face of a student's reluctance to attend school is a type of avoidance which in its worst form could be described as abuse of the child's right to access full, comprehensive education like their peers. Parents should see themselves as partners with the school in trying to set the problem right.
7. Where alternatives are offered to conventional schooling, the parent should encourage and reward participation so that the student's motivation is kept high.
8. Adult literacy and numeracy programs on offer to assist parents with their own growth in skills are worth the effort and a considerable motivational and practical assistance to the student who is experiencing difficulties in these areas.

Schools

All the recommendations and suggestions listed below are predicated on the notion that there should be the political will and funding available to implement them. However the provider is not naive enough to imagine that, in the current climate, either is at an optimal level and so some base recommendations are made for the minimum requirements necessary to affect some improvements in the prospects for this group. The provider is also concerned to address the potential for even greater difficulties with the introduction of changes relating to payments for the 15-18 year group when they are forced back into schooling in order to be eligible for benefit.

1. Since there is something about the very character of the school environment which is repellent to this group, regardless of curriculum or extra assistance for students who experience literacy and numeracy difficulties (often combined with or masked by behavioural problems), the provider strongly recommends that schools look at providing learning experiences for this group on premises or at sites which students do not automatically see as being dragooned 'back to school'.
2. The logical corollary is that alternative programs offered to cater for this group are doomed to failure if they are perceived by the clients as more of the same. That is, they should be as 'un-school like' as possible.
3. Middle class notions of delayed gratification for a period of education and training do not appear to be effective with this group, so programs should be based on rewards. Instantaneous gratification for even the smallest level of success should be developed on notions of token economy behaviour, high topicality of content, negotiation of attendance, programming, curriculum and evaluation.
4. "Success" in the programs terms must also reflect the negotiation of what success means to each individual student, based on their personal construct. A specially tailored program designed as far as possible to reflect positive features of the personal construct and the student's own objectives and desired learning outcomes from the program.
5. Program elements, timing, attendance, teaching strategies and behaviour management practices must ultimately prove, and be seen to be, extremely flexible. However, at least for a compulsory initial period, the provider suggests that attendance be involuntary (ie no show, no pay) so that the self-esteem and life skill issues of these clients can be tackled alongside the learning experiences. In this way, motivation and trust are built up over time.
6. Group instruction and the composition of groups should also be flexible, combining mixed age and level instruction alongside individualised learning experiences.
7. Behaviour management programs and strategies should be based on an analysis of root causes, with the student offering personal constructions of these, as well as qualified assessment by para-educational personnel (like psychologists, social workers, youth and

guidance counsellors and others) rather than be motivated by a desire to achieve peace and conformity in the classroom by treating symptoms. Establishing a relationship between literacy and numeracy difficulties which the student has effectively disguised with disruptive behaviour is often a helpful first process in addressing both faces of the problem. Incorporating parents into truancy management strategies is also integral to the success of these strategies.

8. Given a very low level of ability to articulate needs, concerns and feelings among this group, a large focus in the learning experience needs to be on the development of oral and social skills which can augment this area of the student's operations whilst literacy and numeracy skills develop more slowly over time.
9. Given also that this group is universally uninspired by either curriculum or even those teachers who often provide them with additional help and support in conventional school programs, it is vital that there be extra support for this group by backing up guidance and counselling staff. These students often present with multi-faceted social, family, health, behavioural and learning difficulties. It is inappropriate and inadequate that, in being sent to the over stretched guidance officer for assistance (who whilst most apparently qualified to help is also usually the busiest and least able to offer the long term care that this group requires) they are being failed in yet another area of their school lives.

Summary

Policy makers and administrators need to be honest that the literacy and numeracy programs and testing facilities which are currently heavily targeting primary level students have absolutely no impact upon this group. There needs to be both political will and funding directed towards the needs and interests of this less than fashionable cohort if we are to speak of truly universal education for all students. The provider cannot outline any universal panacea but suggests that all educators ought to be alert to the inevitable outcome of changes to Social Security regulations which link income provision with compulsory schooling. The purposes for this alertness are several but the greatest is to avoid some of the endless frustration for principals and teachers; personal tragedy for students with low skills and no commitment to continuous schooling; and the deterioration of opportunity for all students in junior secondary classrooms as numbers swell with the inclusion of these, the least welcome refugees from today's classrooms, forced to return to school so that they and their families can find some way to survive on ever lower incomes.

What is most disturbing is the provider's view that this will be only the beginning, not the end of the problem. In fact after the introduction of the Youth Allowance in 1999 the problems may grow and have consequences for low socio-economic communities which defy description but which can be speculated upon, viz., growth in youth crime as young people, again expelled from school for the same myriad of problems which caused them to drop out in the first place, attempt to make money anyway, anyhow, anywhere, any time! Domestic violence may grow as young people fail to bring in the little money they used to in the form of the dole because they continue to be reluctant to more (but even worse!) of the same that drove them from school in the first instance. The list could be endless if one speculates on youth suicide, family break up, alcoholism and despair and so on.

The key to catching some of the casualties and preventing some of the fallout for partners on the side like school administrators, providers of infrastructure support, other students, educational planners, providers of recreational and instructional programs and alternative education planners is to be alert to the inevitability of the problems, timing their arrival and to have some alternative recommendations as to how the situation might be assisted in the real political and educational climate.

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The provider strongly recommends that school principals and administrators as well as educational policy makers and planners face several unpleasant truths about the likely scenario which will develop after the implementation of changes to Centrelink allowances to youth aged 15-18 years. These facts exist alongside a pattern of declining youth employment particularly in low socio-economic areas but also co-exist in communities which have some of the characterising features of this one like geographic isolation and poor access to transport. The facts will be that students whom the schools have in a sense gladly dismissed, expelled or excluded because of truanting and other misbehaviour, as well as difficulty in academic achievement, will soon be re-presenting at their doors again, forced to do so by new social security provisions which are attempting to link income provision with compulsory attendance at school.

There is no evidence to suggest that being forced to attend school to get your dole will prove motivational and none to show that the educational programs exist in the local high schools to accommodate this group. The ensuing difficulties for all parties in whole school communities are immense and with up to 900 potential enrollees in Redcliffe/Deception Bay alone, so is the scale of the problem. Students simply will not face more of the same problems at school without immense resentment, frustration and non-cooperation. Eventually many will find themselves dismissed, expelled or excluded as before, but as their payments depend on attendance, they will be forced to make "other" arrangements to make a living. No one can imagine that these efforts will be positive and productive. Youth crime and vandalism against schools is already rampant in this local community and rising, and the increased potential for crime is of huge concern to the Juvenile Aid officers in Redcliffe.

YACCA (Youth and Combined Community Action)

Community based support programs such as YACCA have an invaluable contribution to make in terms of infrastructure support for the sorts of clients which this group and their families constitute. However in interviewing YACCA (who were by no means atypical of similar community based 'relief' organisations) there is a view that these students' literacy and numeracy difficulties, even when coupled with poor oral and life skills and low self-esteem, were pretty much lower order issues. The prevailing attitude still tends to be "Take care of health, housing, domestic violence, alcoholism and so on and eventually you may get round to addressing that problem down lower on the pecking order". By which stage of course the student has been forced into premature departure from schooling altogether and believes that schooling is irrelevant for their life and too hard anyhow.

By all means, focus on life threatening issues as a first priority as they occur, however it is a gross simplification to see literacy and numeracy problems and truancy from school to avoid the shameful consequences of these problems as a lower order issue and therefore not addressed until it is too late.

Summary

Because educational resources for infrastructure support of the personal/domestic/life skill needs for this group are so heavily in demand (and this will only grow as more of these students are forced back into schooling), the provider strongly recommends that these organisations actively seek to expand networks with the guidance and counselling personnel in schools so that these infrastructure issues are being dealt with by those best equipped to deal with them and who in fact see it as their primary responsibility. In other words, YACCA and other community service providers can do invaluable service by closer networking with the schools to case manage these particular aspects of this group of students' problems, leaving teachers more free to address the related educational problems like difficulty with literacy and numeracy.

Again the issue of funding for provision of these support services is a matter of political will and still needs to be acknowledged before it can be addressed under an expanded political agenda.

ACTEA (Adult Community Training and Education Association Inc)

ACTEA (Adult Community Training and Education Association Inc) is constituted as a stakeholder in these deliberations on two grounds: the first is that already ACTEA has picked up some of the clients in these case studies and is providing them currently with on-going education and training in an attempt to break the pattern of truancy which they have displayed at school. In so doing, ACTEA has developed some prototype programs which are working for these individuals. The second is that ACTEA is the only alternative provider in the local area likely to entice these students back into a non-school environment. Should many hundreds of others of like background as the individuals of these case studies be forced to return to school (statistics, school records and anecdotal evidence of the truanting peer group and their parents suggest that could be up to 900 students in the survey area) ACTEA feels that they can provide an example of how effective programs could be when they were conducted away from the unpleasant connotations of school sites, discipline and classroom or teaching methods. Such a scheme could well prove attractive to school principals faced with a massive influx of reluctant learners whose negativity and resistance to both change and conventional classroom approaches, not to mention behaviour management strategies, could be off-putting, even frightening, to inexperienced teachers, other classmates and their parents.

This is true also in communities where because of lack of employment prospects there are no jobs for unskilled youth, and communities where there is no transport to access alternative education, training and job opportunities outside the local area. These latter communities need not necessarily share the low socio-economic status of Redcliffe/Deception Bay because the plight of 'middle class' youth is exacerbated by other factors beyond mere bracket creep. These include the financial pressure on 'middle class' families to fund previously government subsidised services like health, dental and childcare as well as 'extras' within educational programs, and the increasing transport costs associated with the growth of outlying suburbs and provincial towns where access to education, training and jobs is limited by this diminishing access. There is a case to be made, ACTEA feels, for a growing concern for lower 'mddle class' families whose youth increasingly, are beginning to feel the same strains as the case study group in Redcliffe/Deception Bay, although for different reasons. This group will also be affected by changes to income provision rules when they cannot get jobs at school leaving age, when their parents begin to find it too expensive to keep them at school and, yet to get payment they are forced to stay on until aged 18. All that will keep them there is the same requirement to show up to be paid, a motivational factor which, it has already been demonstrated, is not especially inspirational.

Conclusion

The production of this report and its case study evidence incorporated in the appendices, supports the view of government reports and other more anecdotal evidence that there is a crisis occurring in schools and with young people who are deemed "at risk". That this crisis has already had effects on the life chances as well as the short term educational opportunities of this particular group is well documented and supported by the survey evidence and interpretation of the results.

Acknowledgements

MW Training Consultants would like to sincerely thank all those students and their families who gave so generously of their time and insight in contributing to this study. Without their trust and cooperation this study would not have been possible.

The Deception Bay High School staff and administration were in large measure responsible for the successful completion of the survey since their helpfulness and cooperation made the interview process possible.

Thanks are also due to all community agencies surveyed about their perceptions of the extent of the connection between truancy and other problems and for access to records and persons accessing their services.

Finally, thanks to the interviewer and research staff for the successful completion of the report.

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Appendix 1

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: _____

Age: _____

Year Level:

School: _____

Date: _____

1. When you are at school, are you able to cope with the work? _____

2. Have you received extra help in class? _____

   If so, with what subject/s? _____

3. Are you sometimes away from school when you should be there? _____

   If so, how often? _____

   What are the main reasons for staying away? _____

   What do you do instead? _____

4. Are there other people or places you find supportive? _____

   If so, who? _____

   In what way do you find them supportive? _____

5. What do you think are the consequences of you staying away from school?

   _____

6. Write in your own words what you think about school and how it makes you feel.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

TEST ONE

Thinking of leaving school now? _____

Where do you want to go? _____

What do you think you would do during the day? _____

Have you thought about how you would support yourself? _____

Would your parents allow you to stay at home? _____

How would they expect you to spend your time? _____

How do your friends see you? _____

TEST TWO

USING 1998 DIARY

Savage Garden, the Queensland band, will perform on the 17th March 1998.

How many days is that from now? _____

Find the page that gives the Australian Public Holidays 1998.

Circle the dates on the calendar for all the National holidays.

Reorder the first 10 dates on that page to show the holidays in the correct order.

Date	month

TEST THREE

INSIDE TV HITS* 112

List the pages in numbers in order, from smallest to largest. _____

_____

Do you listen to, or watch the videos of, any of those artists on the page? _____

_____

Which ones? _____

_____

What do you like about their music? _____

_____

_____

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TEST FOUR

Look at the poster and then draw a small one that can tell others about

"GOING TO SCHOOL"

209

TEST FIVE

N.B. THE ASSESSOR SHOULD READ OUT THE INSTRUCTIONS

1. Draw up 4 vertical columns.
2. List the first names of 10 people you know well in the first column.
3. Choose 3 from the list and imagine them standing opposite you.
4. One will walk away – imagine them doing that.
5. Which one walked away – why?
6. What is different about that person? What is the similarity between the two left together (e.g. male/female or friend or mate).
7. Write down the contrasts against their names in the second column.
8. Use the same contrasts to describe the others on the list.
9. Now choose 3 more names and do the same to fill the third column.
10. Finally, choose any 3 (whether you've used them before or not). Once again, one walks away – in what way is that one different from the two left? Mark off the rest in the column by using the same contrasts.

Appendix 2

TEST FOUR

Look at the poster and then draw a small one that can tell others about

"GOING TO SCHOOL"

Nell

211

TEST FOUR

Look at the poster and then draw a small one that can tell others about

"GOING TO SCHOOL"

Cliff.

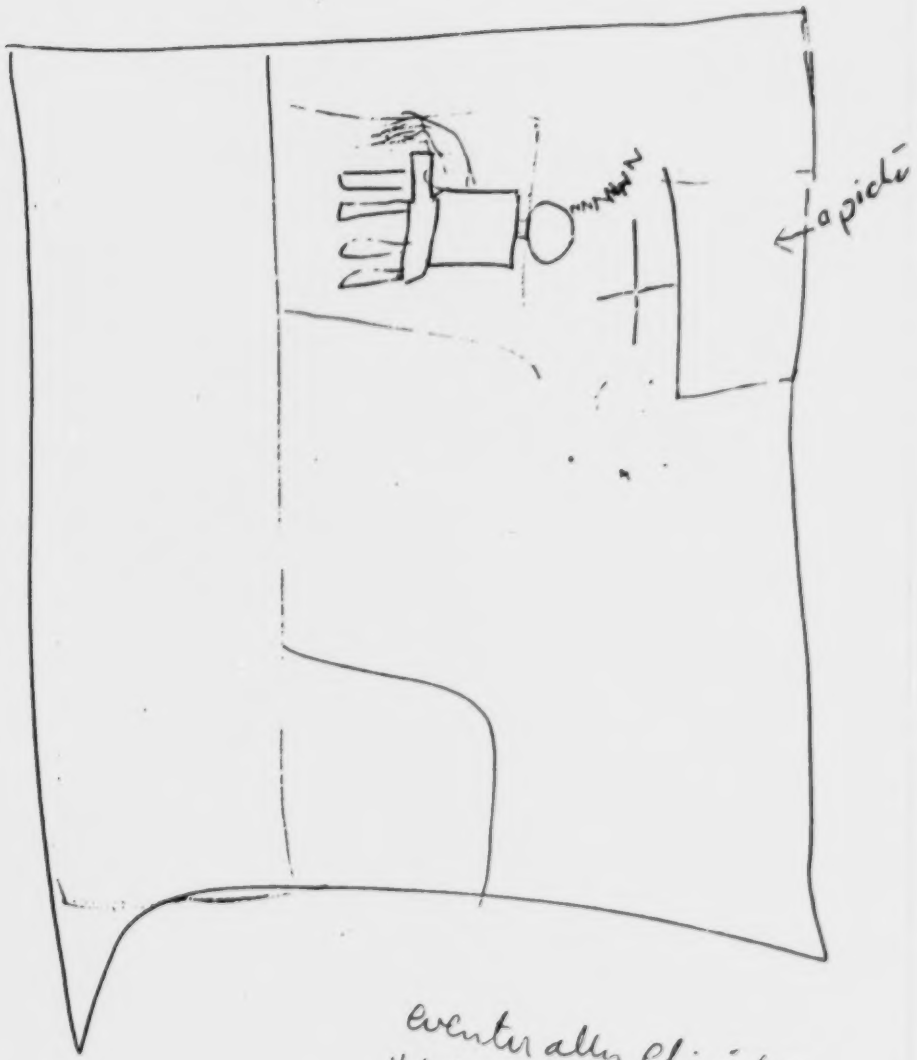
212

TEST FOUR

Look at the poster and then draw a small one that can tell others about

"GOING TO SCHOOL"

Dennis



eventually elicites
"it's boring" I said
"Oic draw that"

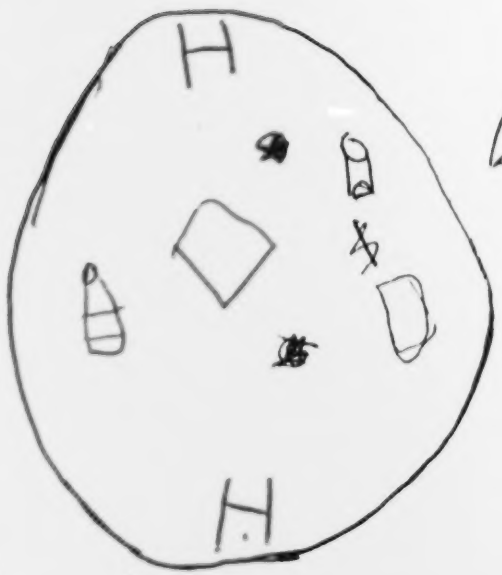
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TEST FOUR

Look at the poster and then draw a small one that can tell others about

"GOING TO SCHOOL"

David



Rubush

Strugled
it just the wall
and the rubbish

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214

TEST FOUR

Look at the poster and then draw a small one that can tell others about

"GOING TO SCHOOL"

Lindsay

If YOU DO YOU hafter go to lunch time detention
+ detention

what would you have drawn if you had been there?

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TEST FOUR

Look at the poster and then draw a small one that can tell others about

"GOING TO SCHOOL"

TEST FOUR

Look at the poster and then draw a small one that can tell others about

"GOING TO SCHOOL"

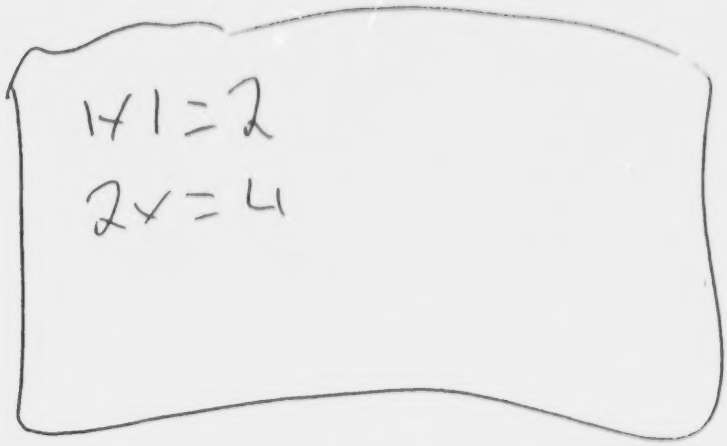
Sean

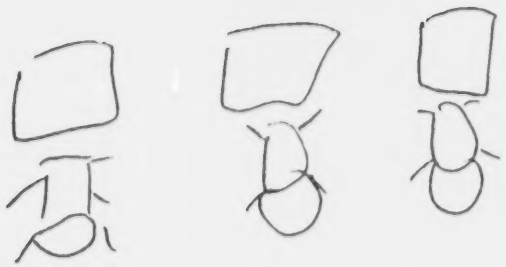
TEST FOUR

Look at the poster and then draw a small one that can tell others about

"GOING TO SCHOOL"

Bob



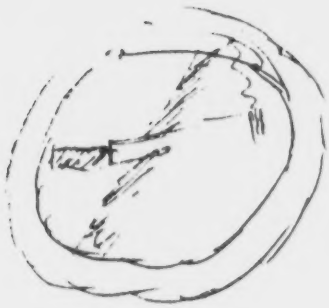


TEST FOUR

Look at the poster and then draw a small one that can tell others about

"GOING TO SCHOOL"

Seth



don't smoke

219

TEST FOUR

Look at the poster and then draw a small one that can tell others about

"GOING TO SCHOOL"

TEST FOUR

Look at the poster and then draw a small one that can tell others about

"GOING TO SCHOOL"

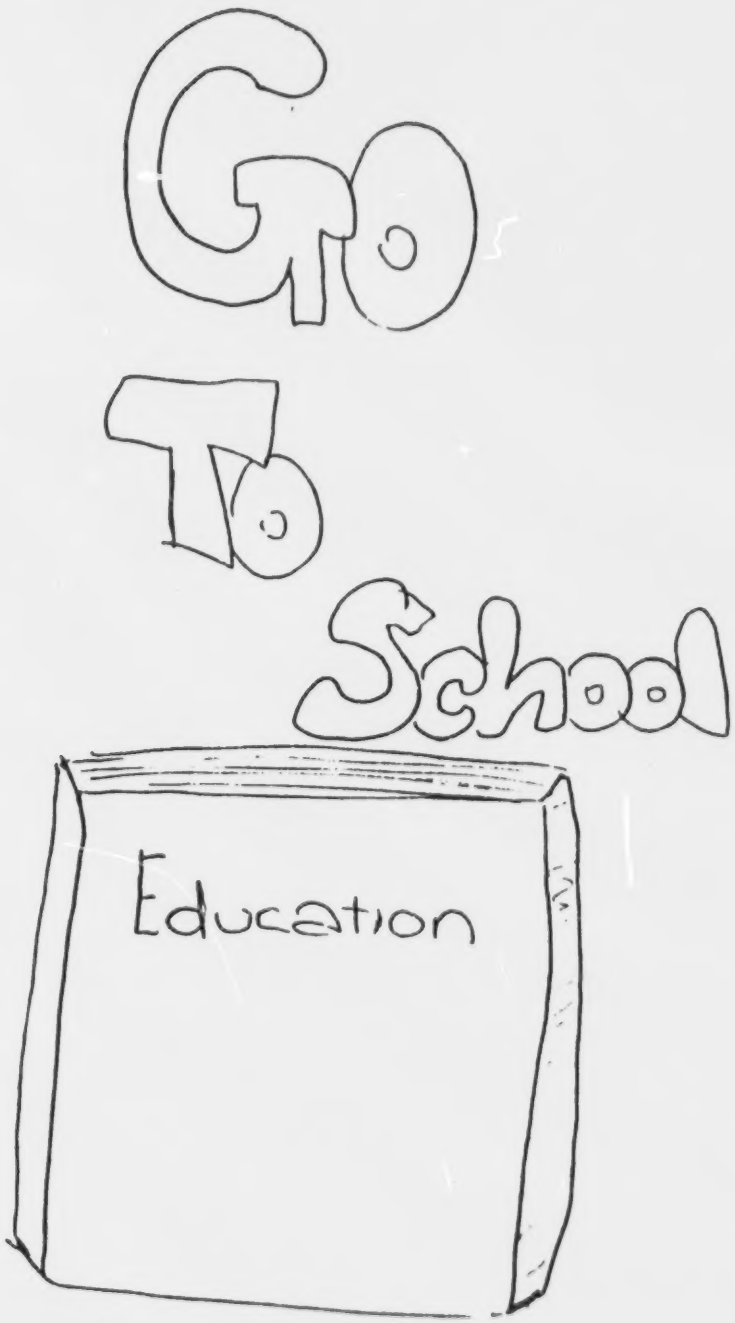
Kellie

TEST FOUR

Look at the poster and then draw a small one that can tell others about

"GOING TO SCHOOL"

Lisa

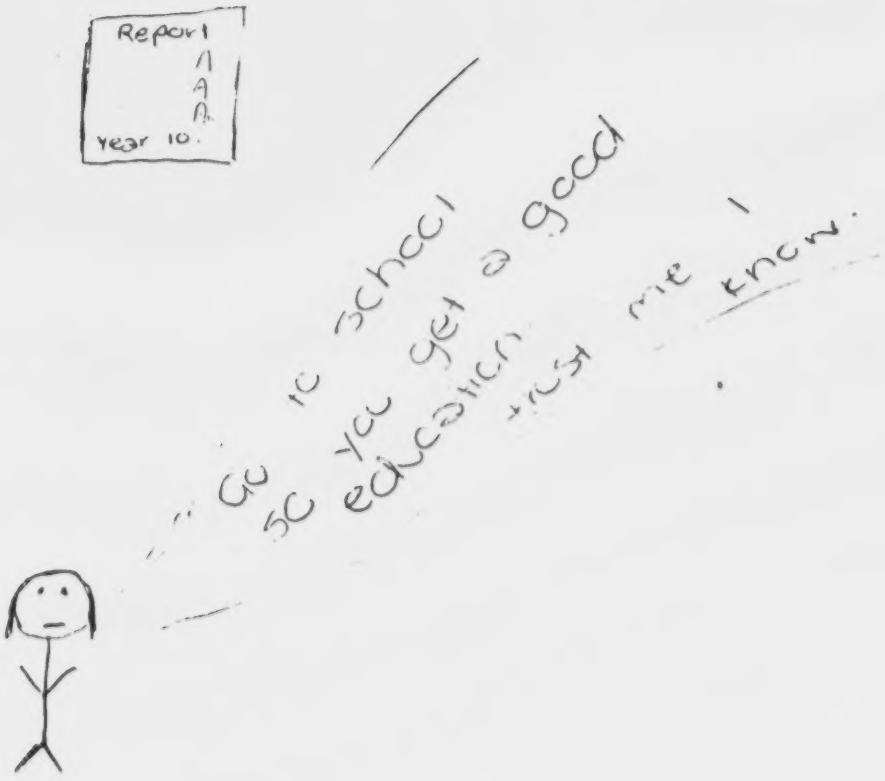


TEST FOUR

Look at the poster and then draw a small one that can tell others about

"GOING TO SCHOOL"

Noela



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Chapter

7

Stradbroke Island Literacy Project

Christine Seabrook

Acknowledgements

This research project would not have been possible without the assistance of the following people:

- ***North Stradbroke Island Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community:***
  The Minjerriba Moorgumpin Elders in Council
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  Quandamooka Land Council
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  Community Development Employment Program

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  Situated at Griffith University, Brisbane

Introduction

The Stradbroke Island Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community was the focus of this research project. Access to the island is by water taxi or vehicular ferry and while not officially classified as a "remote community" by government agencies, travelling to and returning from the mainland is costly, time consuming and solely dependent on the water taxi and ferry services. Should these public transport services be unable to operate, the island is inaccessible (private boat transport excluded).

The Stradbroke Island Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community operates several community programs and services including: the North Stradbroke Island Aboriginal and Islander Housing Cooperative; the Yulu Burri Ba for Community Health Medical Centre; the Community Development Employment Program; the Minjerriba Respite; the Nareeba Moopi Moopi Pa Aged Frail Hostel, the Quandamooka Land Council; and the Nunukul Nughi Land Council. A Technical and Further Education (TAFE) college, built by the community with the assistance of Moreton Institute of TAFE, is also operating on the island.

The aims of the research project were to:

- collaboratively and clearly identify and analyse the real life literacy demands of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults on Stradbroke Island;
- identify cultural factors affecting literacy learning and the delivery of literacy training in isolated areas;
- identify and analyse cultural issues regarding delivery methodologies, techniques and assessment; and
- develop an appropriate and relevant model for the development and delivery of literacy learning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, focussing on real life outcomes.

This report will present the findings of the research project. A literature review will form the basis for deliberations. It will discuss the role vocational education and training should play in providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people with culturally appropriate delivery methods, techniques and assessment. Rather than simply providing education and training "which captures them within the present framework" (Folds and Djuwalpi Marika, 1988:139), it will be argued that all vocational education and training must incorporate an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander vision of building communities that these people can own, control and use. Only then will vocational education and training be able to respond effectively and honestly to community educational needs.

The literature review will then discuss the new and increasing literacy demands with which the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are being confronted. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been, and still are, traditionally oral and/or visual communicators (Langlands, 1988:61) and while a study by Fels (1982; cited by Langlands, 1988) showed that "Aborigines of three communities in Victoria and New South Wales had little or no interest in literacy tuition" and viewed literacy ability as having "little value as a skill in Aboriginal society" (p. 61), some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are becoming increasingly aware that literacy is important for both political and socio-economic reasons (Langlands, 1988:62). The implications of literacy learning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and adult literacy teachers will be discussed. The discussion will highlight the importance of viewing the relationship between spoken and written language as that of a continuum (Hammond, Burns, Joyce, Brosnan and Gerot, 1992:5), that is, from most spoken on the one hand to most written on the other (Hammond, Burns, Joyce, Brosnan and Gerot, 1992:5). In so doing, the oral strengths of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are drawn upon as they are

assisted "to shape and organise texts in ways that are different from speech" (Hammond, Burns, Joyce, Brosnan and Gerot, 1992:13). Building on the oral strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people involves drawing on their own knowledge and experiences, enabling their literacy skills to be developed within relevant contexts.

Finally, although set in the context of literacy learning, a model that could be conducive to all vocational education and training with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island learners will be suggested. This model could enable these learners and their communities to be empowered through their learning, because the focus is on maintaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values and beliefs. It is a model of vocational education and training that would draw upon the life experiences and prior knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island learners free from assumptions regarding the needs of these people.

Following the literature review, the research methodology will be outlined detailing how the research project was carried out. The findings of the project will be provided in the results and an analysis of these results will follow. The final part of the report discusses the implications of the research project including recommendations.

Literature Review

According to the National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Final Report (1995) there has been a "remarkable" increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' participation in TAFE and adult education (p. 73). Further, statistics show that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are undertaking Year 11 and 12 studies in TAFE colleges rather than continuing their education in schools (p. 95).

However, while participation in education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has increased, "the size of the gaps between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' participation and all other students' participation remains largely unchanged" (National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Final Report, 1995:81). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have been, and still are, under represented at all levels of education both in numbers and outcomes. There is still much work to be done to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are afforded the same educational opportunities as other Australians. While TAFE appears to be the preferred provider of post-compulsory education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Final Report, [National Review], 1995:73) it needs to continue to answer the specific needs of these people and endeavour to find ways to increase their participation in education and training.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people seek participation in education and training which provides positive learning outcomes as well as "celebrating and reinforcing their cultural values, traditions and identity (National Tertiary Education Industry Union, 1997:1.3.4). In short, improving educational opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is not simply a matter of increasing numbers or access to existing forms of education and training, but rather "improving education in terms of whether the right kind of education is being offered" (National Tertiary Education Industry Union, 1997:1.3.2). As McClay (1988:147; cited by Byrnes, 1993:157) says "adult education can be an agent that serves Aboriginal people or one which seeks to control and dominate them".

Loveday and Young (1984; cited by Byrnes, 1993:160), however, warn against sweeping generalisations being applied to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. A critical factor is to make educational outcomes appropriate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

people's specific needs and these needs may differ from community to community. As Thorne, Morris and Walker (1988:128) state "communities vary enormously and so programs must be designed for each community". Education and training which assumes that there are "the same jobs in every community, in council and community enterprises ... and that training is simply a matter of providing skills for those jobs, is not a two-way process" (Folds and Marika, 1988:139). Education and training should be provided in ways that value and respect the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It should not be based on individual or institutional aspirations, but rather, based on community aspirations and empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people "to see and act on alternatives in building their own communities" (Folds and Marika, 1988:139).

It is vital, therefore, that members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are involved in "the decisions which are made in institutions that directly shape and influence the nature and scope of indigenous ... education programs and experiences" (National Tertiary Education Industry Union, 1997:3.1.3). No one is able to articulate the educational needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people better than the people themselves. The community elders, in particular, must be involved in all stages of course planning, preparation and evaluation (Thorne, Morris, and Walker, 1988). This collaboration is not a "one-off" and needs to be ongoing. As Saggers and Gray (1988:256) say, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people "are like people anywhere [and] may change their minds according to the evaluation of a particular situation". Non-Aboriginal educators need to be much more in tune with the changes of opinion that occur in any community (Saggers and Gray, 1988:257). They need to consult freely and widely and accept advice on appropriate strategies to use (Ison and Gillies, 1997). In this way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are able to "determine their own educational and vocational goals and actively work to achieve them" (Ison and Gillies, 1997).

The National Review (1995) says that more than half of the students that are participating in TAFE and adult education courses are "involved in basic education and bridging courses ... courses designed to improved literacy and numeracy skills as a first step to further employment and education opportunities" (p. 89). According to the National Review (1995:89) this is due to the recognition by some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of the importance of "achieving proficiency in standard English in both its spoken and written forms". This is not at the expense of their own languages but rather reflects the high value being placed on competency in both English and their own languages (National Review, 1995:89).

The reasons for this interest are varied. The National Review (1995) says that "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' outcomes from education are not the same as those of other Australian students ... their achievements in literacy and numeracy are lower" (p. 84). Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would appear to be turning to TAFE and adult education to remedy the lack of culturally appropriate education in their compulsory school years (The National Review, 1995). According to Martin (1987; cited by Procter, 1988), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should learn to use writing in "both the vernacular and in English in order to: conserve (save) and maintain the language and culture; achieve status and power in mainstream society; communicate with others both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal; and negotiate with Governments and policy makers" (p. 223).

Procter (1988) reinforces this last point when she cites examples of reports or submissions that have been commissioned by Aboriginal people, being rejected by high level officials because they have not been written by Aboriginal communities themselves (p. 224). Langlands (1988) also adds that literacy is important for political reasons, enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people "to deal with those outside their culture – politicians, government officials and non-Aboriginal community workers" (p. 62). Further,

there are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who want to become teachers in community education programs or document history and stories before they are lost (Langlands, 1988:62). The National Review (1995) argues that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' education should include literacy education "since literacy in the dominant culture is a prerequisite for more equitable education and employment outcomes" (p. 89). The National Review (1995), further, stresses the importance of beginning from "where the learner is at" (p. 89), that is, recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' strengths in non-print forms of communication, extending these strengths and using them as "a means in themselves as well as the basis to develop skills and competencies in print-related literacy areas" (Procter, 1988:225).

Building on learners' strengths in oral and/or visual communication in order to extend their literacy knowledge and skills is not new in the field of adult literacy teaching. Hammond, Burns, Joyce, Brosnan and Gerot (1992) say that a recognition of the similarities and differences between spoken and written language is important for a clear articulation of the term 'literacy' (p. 13). They say the relationship between spoken and written language can be conceptualised as "that of a continuum, from most spoken on the one hand to most written on the other" (Hammond, Burns, Joyce, Brosnan and Gerot, 1992:5). Writing is not simply speech written down and, while Hammond et al. (1992) say that talk about a topic is a necessary preparation for writing, it is not sufficient. A focus on the structure and language patterns of written text is important so that learners learn how to move from talking to writing (Hammond et al., 1992:13). This approach to literacy learning/teaching includes a focus on language at the level of whole texts (Hammond et al., 1992:13). Students are introduced to whole written texts "within an appropriate context of situation" (Hammond et al., 1992:13). The teacher encourages discussions with the learners about the purpose and the schematic structure of the text. These discussions then "provide the framework for a focus on particular features of sentence construction, spelling and punctuation" (Hammond, et al., 1992:13). Soifer, Irwin, Crumrine, Honzaki, Simmons and Young (1990) say that within a whole language approach,

> *the learner's background knowledge is accessed and activated, and information from printed and computerised sources is gleaned. Reading, listening, speaking and writing ... are incorporated in lessons ... All these language areas are interrelated and interdependent, they nurture each other and are mutually strengthened as each becomes stronger (p. 10).*

These approaches to literacy learning and teaching would appear to be highly compatible with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learning styles. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people prefer to learn through "real life performance" and experience rather than by "practice in contrived conditions" (Langlands, 1988:64). By drawing on the learners' background knowledge, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are able to learn according to real life experiences, allowing them to make connections between what is known and what has to be learnt (Procter, 1988:226). Their own values and cultural knowledge are included in their new learning experiences. Focussing on language at the level of whole texts encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to "move through the phases of thinking, talking, writing to reading" (Campbell, 1990:4). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a tendency to learn the whole rather than sequencing and learning parts of skills (Procter, 1988:226). Implementing a whole language approach with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would involve using all the systems of language in order to create meaning (Kemp, 1990:6). According to Kemp (1990) "language users do not ... isolate one aspect (system) of language and drill on it until it is thought to be mastered and then move on to another aspect of language" (p. 6).

With consideration of the above theoretical principles, it is suggested that appropriate adult education programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners should:

- be relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners' current needs as the learners perceive them and be conducted in an environment which is familiar and comfortable for the learners;
- respect and incorporate into the teaching/learning process the wisdom, knowledge and experience of members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, particularly the elders, in so doing encouraging a truly collaborative and culturally relevant environment. The focus is on group learning and co-operation and the teacher's role is that of co-learner;
- be flexible and adaptable in order to meet any changes that may arise; provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners to practise and apply their knowledge and skills enabling the learners to see both the relevance and the positive results of their learning (Byrnes, 1993). This can also assist in reducing any negative connotations the learners may have regarding their prior formal educational experiences and/or feelings of failure.

Procter (1988:226) says that teachers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students should develop knowledge and awareness of the preferred learning styles of their students. Teachers should be 'people' oriented and genuinely committed to helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students "achieve success in their learning and self-esteem" (Procter, 1988:226). While there is limited research available on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, Black (1988:2) says that the teacher-student relationship is critical to successful learning.

Developing appropriate teaching methods and strategies for adult literacy programs that will be of any significance and value for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is dependent on involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities themselves. Programs must reflect specific community needs and be based on community values and beliefs. There is a need for more information, courses and programs that will "help teachers [and educational institutions] to work more effectively with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and to work in a sensitive and appropriate manner" (National Review, 1995:92).

Methodology

Approval for the research project was sought and gained from the Minjerriba Moorgumpin Elders in Council, North Stradbroke Island Aboriginal and Islander Housing Cooperative and Redland Shire Council. The aims, anticipated outcomes and benefits were discussed with these groups.

In order to monitor the progress and associated costs of the project, a plan of action was developed detailing a project overview, timeline and budget.

The researcher(s) visited community groups on the island, prior to the commencement of the project, to explain the project aims and gauge community/individual willingness to be involved in the research. It was stressed during this orientation visit that confidentiality would be maintained at all times and that no identifying names would be used in the report. It was explained that the results of the research project would be used to improve the delivery of literacy learning in the community. Several members of these community groups expressed a willingness to be interviewed and interview dates and times were established.

However, difficulty was encountered in the fieldwork in gaining access to a number of participants with whom interviews had been scheduled. Several interviews were postponed due to a community meeting and were rescheduled for the following week. They were again postponed. Due to time constraints and budgeted travelling costs, these interviews were abandoned.

The researcher was assisted in gaining access to an alternative group of participants. However, this affected the size of the sampling. A total of nine (9) informants from three (3) of the community groups on the island were interviewed.

The interviews were supplemented with a questionnaire (Appendix) that was prepared to focus and structure the research. The researcher read the questions and recorded answers on the questionnaire sheet, repeating what was written to the participant. Where participants consented, the interviews were also recorded onto a cassette tape to aid reporting accuracy.

All of the participants readily provided information. However, initially, some were hesitant about divulging information regarding their literacy abilities. The researcher attempted to make the participants feel comfortable through informal discussions and by stressing confidentiality prior to the interviews and any subsequent recording of information.

Data from each source was collated and analysed. Implications and recommendations relating to the evolvement of a culturally appropriate model for the development of literacy learning experiences for the target group were then addressed.

Results

Demographics:

Nine (9) members of the Stradbroke Island Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community participated in the research project. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the demographics of the participants.

Table 1

Number of participants	Ages: from / to	Female	Male	Aboriginal heritage	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage	Aboriginal and European heritage
9	18 – 64 years	7	2	6	2	1

Employment:

Of the nine (9) participants interviewed, one (1) is employed full-time, three (3) participants are employed part-time, five (5) participants are unemployed.

The occupations of the four (4) participants who are either full-time or part-time employees include:

- Administrative Assistant
- Administrative Secretary
- Bookkeeper
- Odd jobs, mechanic.

The five (5) unemployed participants are enrolled in a full-time Applied Environmental Practice course currently being delivered at the TAFE College on the island.

Education:

The participants attended various schools both on Stradbroke Island and the mainland. Six participants attained Year 10 level at secondary school as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Participant / Sex	School(s) Attended	Year Level Attained
#1 Female	Dunwich Primary	4
#2 Female	Guardian Angels Primary	10
#3 Female	Dunwich Primary/Cleveland High	12
#4 Female	Cleveland High	10
#5 Female	Dunwich Primary/Wynnum High	10
#6 Female	Dunwich Primary/Dunwich High	10
#7 Female	Dunwich Primary/Cleveland High	9
#8 Male	Dunwich Primary/Cleveland High/De La Salle College	10
#9 Male	Dunwich Primary/Dunwich High	10

The participants were asked to describe their school experiences. Their responses were varied with most respondents expressing some negative feelings associated with school.

#1 Female (27 years)

"I loved school ... I did Year 8 on the island ... but then went to Cleveland High ... I didn't like school when I was there ... we were treated awful by the teachers and students ... we were segregated in class and weren't treated fairly by the teachers"

#2 Female (49 years)

"I liked school ... I was always embarrassed about my reading though ... I didn't like it when I'd be made to get up and read aloud in front of people"

#3 Female (27 years)

"didn't like school ... doesn't tap in to how Aboriginal people learn"

#4 Male (21 years)

"Yeah ... I liked school ... playing football ... but it's frustrating when you need to learn something in a different way and you know you can learn it, but it won't go through ... I have to find a way that's easy for me to learn it"

#5 Female (46 years)

"Great ... best years of my life"

#6 Female (18 years)

"it was OK ... didn't like the rules"

#7 Male (37 years)

"didn't like school ... I had other interests ... living on the island it's difficult to commute everyday ... That's why I ended up at De La Salle ... I doubled what I got at Cleveland ... it was hell commuting to Cleveland"

#8 Female (40 years)

"liked school ... yeah ... except for the last year ... went to college after junior"

#9 Female (64 years)

"wagged school, mainly the teachers were the reason"

Post compulsory education/training:

All of the respondents have participated in, or are currently participating in, some form of post-compulsory education/training. A breakdown of post-compulsory education/training and the education/training provider or institution is provided in Table 3.

Seven (7) participants completed the requirements of their training programs. The two (2) who participated in the Batchelor College Associate Diploma have deferred their studies, but expressed a desire to complete the course in the future.

The participants were asked their perceptions of and/or experiences with post-compulsory education/training. Their comments were expressed as follows:

" it was practical, hands-on learning"

"I had a passion for it" (trade)

"it gives you qualifications"

"you get paid to do training"

"improved chances for employment"

"improved confidence"

"helped me get more jobs ... I've gained a lot from training, you know ... confidence".

Table 3

Post-compulsory Education/Training Activity	Provider/Institution
Leap Program	Commonwealth Employment Service (CES)
Associate Diploma of Applied Science of Natural and Cultural Resource Management	Batchelor College, Northern Territory
Travel Consultant Course	Private Provider
Office Skills	Skillshare
Nurses Aide	Skillshare
First Aid/Medical Aide/Health Aide	On-the-job training
Construction	TAFE
Pre-vocational Course	TAFE
Applied Environmental Practice Certificates	TAFE
Horticulture Certificates I & II	TAFE
Trade Certificate	TAFE
Office Administration	TAFE
Wood Carving	TAFE
Business Management	TAFE
Boat Building	TAFE
Mechanics	TAFE
Nursery-hand	TAFE

However, some informants also expressed negative perceptions of and/or experiences with post-compulsory education/training. These responses included:

"things were not explained clearly"

"teachers didn't communicate"

"I didn't understand some things and they weren't explained"

"didn't like being inside, in a building ... you learn more outside"

"teachers"

"too much theory"

"course was the wrong choice for me ... waste of time ... prefer hands-on, practical training"

"the teachers came and went, no consistency ... teachers were not good at explaining and communicating, I used to explain things to people so they could understand. We need commitment from organisations ... the TAFE here isn't being used to its full advantage ... it would be useful to inform them [the community] of what training can lead to, at the moment job possibilities are not discussed".

Literacy and Numeracy:

The participants were asked the types of reading, writing and mathematical tasks they were required to do. They were asked to specify how often they needed to do these tasks and whether they experienced difficulties with any of the tasks.

Reading -

The reading materials identified by the participants were:

- books/novels
- magazines
- homework sheets
- class handouts
- banking forms/cash receipt books
- forms
- filing
- newspapers
- technical manuals
- letters
- reports and submissions
- resource material (organisations and businesses).

The participants were asked about the frequency of their reading. They were asked to select from daily, weekly, fortnightly, or less often. Seven (7) participants said that they read daily. One (1) participant said that they read less often and one (1) participant self-identified as a non-reader.

When asked if they experienced any difficulty with any reading tasks, three (3) participants answered no, and if they do experience difficulty, they ask or use a dictionary.

Six (6) participants (five [5] of whom read daily) said that they sometimes experience difficulty with reading tasks.

Comments included:

"sometimes ... but I use a dictionary to look up words I don't know"

"I try to sound out words I don't know, but it doesn't always work"

"yeah, sometimes ... the plant names ... I look them up in the glossary".

Writing -

The participants stated the following writing tasks as those they needed to do:

- writing minutes of meetings
- notes
- correspondence (business and personal)
- shopping lists
- memos
- newsletters
- diary of plants
- forms
- homework/taking class notes
- receipt books
- cash books
- reports and submissions.

There were varied responses as to the frequency of these tasks, shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Daily	Weekly	Fortnightly	Less Often
4	2	1	2

When asked if they experienced difficulties with their specified writing tasks, six (6) informants responded no.

Three (3) informants responded yes. Their responses included:

"yeah, I have trouble spelling words I don't know"

"when I write letters, I only use words I know"

"I didn't pass English at school ... I haven't got confidence when I have to write something ... I only write when I have to".

Numeracy -

When asked the numeracy tasks they were required to do, the informants identified the following:

- addition
- subtraction
- multiplication
- division
- measurement
- ratio
- percentages
- budgets.

The frequency of these tasks is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Daily	Weekly	Fortnightly	Less Often
5	1	–	3

Six (6) participants said they do not experience difficulties with the numeracy tasks they are required to do. Of these, four (4) participants stated the frequency of numeracy tasks as daily, one (1) participant stated they were required to do numeracy tasks weekly and one (1) participant said they did numeracy tasks less often.

Three (3) participants said that they experience difficulties with numeracy tasks. Their comments included:

"I have trouble working out volume ... we learn maths in the course ... the teacher shows me but it just won't go through"

"yeah, algebra ... anything that's a higher level really"

"if it was something unfamiliar I'd have trouble".

Training Needs:

The participants were asked to identify their training needs. They were given the following examples:

- reading
- writing
- spelling
- maths
- computers
- office administration
- other.

The training needs as identified by the participants are shown in Table 6.

Integrated Literacy / Numeracy and Vocational Training:

When asked if they preferred literacy and numeracy to be integrated with other training, five (5) participants said that they would prefer an integrated approach. Some of their responses included:

"computer courses especially, the terminology needs to be explained"

"in with other training ... if you read something it has to be useful"

"blended in with other training ... a couple of hours a week, reading, spelling, writing and that".

Four (4) participants responded that they would prefer literacy/numeracy as separate courses. Of these, two (2) participants said they would prefer a short course in literacy/numeracy.

"I'd rather do a short course and get accreditation for it"

"knock it over quick".

Informant (F)emale (M)ale	Reading	Writing	Spelling	Maths	Computers	Office Admin.	Other
#1 (F)		1		1	1	1	Computerised bookkeeping, small business management, submission writing, report writing, motivational courses, train the trainer, job applications and work experience
#2 (F)	1	1	1	1			Modelling, hospitality
#3 (F)	1	1			1		Speaking, conflict resolution
#4 (F)	1	1	1		1	1	
#5 (F)	1	1	1	1	1		Assignment writing, mechanics
#6 (F)	1	1					Art, pottery
#7 (F)	1	1	1	1	1		
#8 (M)	1	1	1				Environmental studies
#9 (M)	1	1	1	1			Senior studies Years 11 & 12
Total	8	9	6	5	5	2	

Table 6

Training Delivery:

When asked to choose where they would prefer to be delivered: on Stradbroke Island; on the mainland; or don't care, seven (7) informants selected on Stradbroke Island.

One participant who responded "don't care" also added, "It doesn't matter ... don't care ... it would be more convenient here though ... it's hard for some people to commute to the mainland".

The participants were asked if they would prefer classes to be all indigenous students; indigenous/non-indigenous students; or don't care.

Table 7

Indigenous	Indigenous/non indigenous	Don't Care
1	5	3

One (1) participant responded that they would prefer all indigenous students. Three (3) informants responded that they didn't care.

Of the five (5) who responded that they preferred indigenous/non-indigenous students. Some of their comments included:

"when you close off training you miss learning from each other"

"it'd be good to have non-indigenous people so you can inform them on the culture and that".

The participants were asked to select a response as to whether they preferred classes to consist of students from a similar age group, mixed ages or don't care.

Table 8 shows their responses.

Table 8

Similar Age Group	Mixed Ages	Don't Care
2	4	3

Of the four (4) participants who said that they preferred mixed ages, some responses included:

"you're not stuck with one group"

"you can help out the younger kids ... you might be older and have more knowledge and you can tell them some other things that they might be having trouble with"

"the same as before [previous question] ... you miss learning from each other".

The participants were asked to select their preferences regarding class sizes. Table 9 shows their responses.

Table 9

Small Group	Large Group	Don't Care
6	0	3

One (1) participant who responded that they didn't care about the class size commented,

"some teachers can't handle large groups though ... it depends on the teacher".

Of those participants who indicated their preference for small groups, their comments included:

"you can help each other out and the teacher would know you more"

"you listen more in small groups ... with a large group it's difficult to be heard and sometimes you get side-tracked".

Additional Comments:

At the conclusion of each interview, the participants were asked if they had any additional comments that they wished to make. Eight (8) participants declined adding further comments. The one (1) participant who wished to comment further stated:

"just that literacy and numeracy is really needed here and I'd like to see something set up ... I would like to be involved if something can get going ... people need things on applying for jobs and what to do and say at job interviews, you know ... and motivational courses to keep them going ... the courses also need to include the possibilities of things ... there's so much untapped potential here".

Analysis

The next section provides an analysis of the results. Although based on a relatively small sampling of the Stradbroke Island Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, the data collected does suggest some trends concerning the community's real life literacy needs and cultural factors affecting the delivery of literacy learning and training.

Education:

Seven (7) of the nine (9) participants achieved a Year 10 or higher level of attainment at school. However, a majority (6) of the participants said they experience some degree of difficulty with reading tasks with fewer participants (3) reporting difficulty with writing tasks. This finding tends to concur with The National Review (1995) which claims that educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must not only be statistically equitable, but also culturally appropriate for them to achieve the same educational opportunities as all other Australians. Participation rates and year level attainments are meaningless if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are not assisted to achieve their full potential. Eight (8) of the nine (9) participants expressed some negative associations with their formal school years. Perhaps the most alarming comment about negative school experiences came from a twenty-seven (27) year old female participant. The participant attended high school in approximately 1985 and she recalled segregation practices and "awful" treatment by the teachers. The National Review (1995) expressed concerns that "offensive and aggressive occurrences are still entrenched in schools", and while strategies have been developed to significantly overcome both overt and covert racism this would need to be considered a major contributing factor to inequitable educational outcomes, literacy and numeracy achievements included. All of those involved in providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities with vocational education and training, teachers in particular, should be trained in cross-cultural communication skills prior to undertaking work in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The participants involved in this research have undergone a considerable amount of post-compulsory education and training, a finding that tends to support the National Review (1995:73). However, while the participants expressed feelings of "improved confidence" and "improved chances for employment", five (5) are unemployed. This would seem to be consistent with one participant's comments that "the job possibilities" are not

made clear to those who participate in post-compulsory education and training. It is vital, therefore, that post-compulsory education and training is provided in more meaningful ways if it is to truly benefit the Stradbroke Island Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Because job opportunities on the island are limited, it is necessary for thoughtful and careful planning and consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community on the island to ensure that the benefits of education and training are maximised and that the education and training that is being provided is meeting specific community needs.

Learning Styles:

Four (4) participants said that they either did not understand concepts or that concepts were not explained clearly in some of the education and training programs in which they had participated. In reference to a training program that was delivered on the island, another informant said,

"I used to have to explain to everyone what the teacher meant, so they could understand".

This is not unique to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners, as most individuals have a preferred learning style which may not be accommodated within some training programs. However, it is necessary that teachers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students use a variety of delivery methods to ensure connections are made between what the learners know and what has to be learnt. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are traditionally oral/visual communicators and delivery methods should incorporate pictorial and visual materials/resources accordingly. Equally, two-way oral communication between the teacher and the students should be a feature of any education and training program. This open oral communication could be a useful way for the teacher to determine and rectify any student misunderstandings.

Two (2) participants expressed a preference for practical, hands-on training. Education and training programs need to be structured so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students can see positive results and the relevance of the learning in which they are engaged. The students should be given opportunities to practise and use their new knowledge.

Training Needs:

Table 6 shows the responses of the participants when asked about their training needs. Interestingly, all nine (9) participants said they would like training in writing skills, however, only three (3) participants said they experienced difficulty with writing tasks.

This discrepancy could be due to the realisation that they are facing increasing writing demands. As one participant said,

"submission writing [for funding] and report writing ... good ideas get stopped at that stage".

The majority of the participants identified literacy, numeracy and computers as priority training areas.

Five (5) participants said they would prefer literacy and numeracy to be integrated with other vocational training. This could reflect the findings from Fels study (1982; cited by Langlands, 1988) in which literacy alone was found to have little value as a skill in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander society. This preference for integrated literacy and vocational training could be due to the realisation that literacy skills are necessary for effective participation and outcomes in **all** vocational education and training. The National Review (1995) supports this view and says "all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' education should include literacy education" (p. 89). Including literacy in all vocational education would enable the implementation of a whole language approach. Concepts associated with vocational education and training could be made easier to

understand by focussing on the language features and patterns that are used.

Training Delivery:

Stradbroke Island is the preferred venue for training according to seven (7) of the participants, with most of these citing the difficulties and costs associated with commuting to and returning from the mainland. Adult learning is facilitated when learning occurs in a familiar and comfortable environment (Byrnes, 1993). Situating training on Stradbroke Island would remove many of the difficulties associated with commuting to the mainland.

While the participants appeared to be divided as to whether they preferred classes to consist of a mix of indigenous and non-indigenous students and mixed age groups, some informants expressed the benefits of learning from each other. This would appear to indicate some of the participants' preference for a collaborative learning environment.

Six (6) of the participants responded that they preferred small class sizes. Some of the them said that communication with the teacher was easier and more effective in small groups, and as Black (1988:2) says, "it is the teacher-student relationship that is of paramount importance to success in learning".

Recommendations

Based on the research data gathered and the analysis of this data regarding the delivery of literacy learning within the Stradbroke Island Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, the following recommendations are made:

- This research project has presented a theoretical framework for the delivery of literacy learning within the Stradbroke Island Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. It is recommended that a literacy program be implemented in order to gauge the effectiveness of this theoretical framework;
- The Stradbroke Island Elders and members of the Stradbroke Island Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community should be consulted and involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the literacy program. The program should include the community's cultural concepts, understandings, values and visions for the future;
- It is recommended for students to gain maximum benefit from literacy learning that the program should be integrated with other vocational education and training (e.g. meeting procedures, report/submission writing, job applications/resumes);
- It is recommended that peer-tutoring and mentoring be encouraged throughout the program in order to foster a collaborative learning environment;
- Teaching resources and/or materials used in the program should reflect the specific needs and contexts of the Stradbroke Island Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community;
- It is recommended that this program be situated on Stradbroke Island to ensure a comfortable, familiar learning environment and reduce transport difficulties;
- It is recommended that the teacher/s responsible for delivering this program have an awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' preferred learning styles, have excellent cross-cultural communication skills and have the ability to use a variety of teaching and assessment strategies. The teacher/s should possess adult literacy teaching qualifications.

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Appendix 1

STRADBROKE ISLAND RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Name _____

DOB _____ M/F _____

Stradbroke Island group _____

☐ Aboriginal heritage ☐ Torres Strait Islander heritage

EDUCATION:

School Attended _____

Level Attained _____

What was school like for you? _____

_____

_____

_____

What, if any, training have you participated in since leaving school?

_____ Completed ☐ YES ☐ NO

_____ Completed ☐ YES ☐ NO

_____ Completed ☐ YES ☐ NO

How was the training mainly presented?

- ☐ on Stradbroke island
- ☐ on the mainland
- ☐ all indigenous students
- ☐ indigenous and non-indigenous students
- ☐ similar age group
- ☐ mixed ages
- ☐ small group
- ☐ large group

What did you find positive / good about the training? _____

What did you find frustrating / negative about the training? _____

EMPLOYMENT:

Are you working at the moment? ☐ YES ☐ NO

What sort of work do you do? _____

LITERACY / NUMERACY:

What reading do you need to do? _____

_____

_____

How often do you need to do these tasks?

☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Fortnightly ☐ Less often

Do you have difficulty with any of these reading tasks? _____

_____

What writing do you need to do? _____

_____

_____

How often do you need to do these tasks?

☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Fortnightly ☐ Less often

Do you have difficulty with any of these writing tasks? _____

_____

What maths do you need to do? _____

_____

_____

How often do you need to do these tasks?

☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Fortnightly ☐ Less often

Do you have difficulty with any of these maths tasks? _____

_____

_____

TRAINING NEEDS:

If offered, what sort of training would you be interested in?

- reading / writing/ spelling
- maths
- computers
- office administration

Other _____

_____

_____

Would you like literacy / numeracy training to be integrated with something else (e.g. arts and crafts, jewellery making, budgeting, computers)?

_____

_____

_____

How would you prefer this training to be delivered?

- on Stradbroke Island
- on the mainland
- don't care
- all indigenous students
- indigenous/non-indigenous students
- don't care
- similar age group
- mixed ages
- don't care
- small group
- large group
- don't care

Chapter

8

Stradbroke Island Literacy Project Stage 2

L. Freeman and C. F. Seabrook

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  North Stradbroke Island Aboriginal and Islander Housing Cooperative
  Yulu Burri Ba for Community Health Medical Centre
  Quandamooka Land Council
  North Stradbroke Island Technical and Further Education College Staff and Students
  Community Development Employment Program
- ***Language Australia Adult Literacy Research Network - Qld Research Projects:***
  Situated at Griffith University, Brisbane

Introduction

This research project (Stage 2) presented the findings of a one day workshop on meeting skills with follow-up consultation, conducted with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community on North Stradbroke Island.

Good practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adult education needs "to be informed by good theory and good research" (Boughton and Durnan, 1997). The one day workshop reflected the findings of previous research (Stage 1) carried out with the same cohorts earlier this year. The findings from Stage 1 presented a model for the delivery of integrated literacy and vocational education and training that would be appropriate for all adult learners, but particularly with the North Stradbroke Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

This model included:

- involving the North Stradbroke Island elders and members of the community in the planning, implementation and evaluation of any vocational education and training. This also included adhering to the community's cultural concepts, understandings, values and visions for the future;
- integrating literacy with all vocational education and training;
- establishing and encouraging a collaborative learning environment through peer tutoring and mentoring;
- ensuring that teaching resources and/or materials used should reflect the specific needs and contexts of the North Stradbroke Island Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community;
- situating the delivery of any vocational education and training on North Stradbroke Island ensuring a comfortable, familiar learning environment and reducing the difficulties associated with transport costs and availability;
- ensuring that facilitators possess adult literacy teaching qualifications, have an awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples' preferred learning styles, excellent cross-cultural communication skills and have the ability to use a variety of teaching and assessment strategies.

The North Stradbroke Island Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community has several organisations (housing, health and land councils) whose key roles include the efficient management of their community. The elders and members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community who sit on the committees of these organisations are being confronted with increasing administrative tasks and accountability demands of funding bodies.

After consultation with members of the Stradbroke Island Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island community, the one-day workshop was implemented. It was designed to include meeting procedure, preparation of agendas, recording of minutes, official and group member roles and meeting jargon. The workshop concluded with a mock meeting to enable the participants to put the day's strategies into practice.

This report contains a literature review which provides the theoretical framework, that is: the importance of consultation and negotiation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure meaningful educational outcomes; designing culturally appropriate resources; ensuring easy access to training for participants; and implementing and adhering to adult learning principles. This report also includes the research methodology, findings and observations and recommendations.

Literature Review

The National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Final Report (1995) found that many community committees requested training in "running meetings, making submissions, managing finances and bookkeeping" (p. 21). However, despite these requests and enormous amounts of funding, Ah Chee (1998) says that "most" Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are still not getting the training they need. Ah Chee (1998) goes on to argue that the reasons why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's training needs are still not being answered are because "mainstream vocational education and training is being driven by the needs of globalised industry, by an economy which is dominated by the needs of multinational corporations" and up to now the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been "tacked on in the name of access and equity". Furthermore, Ah Chee (1998) notes that the provision of courses that are not

"written for people who don't speak English as their first language" and who may have left school lacking adequate literacy and numeracy skills, are not appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's needs.

To ensure meaningful educational outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adult education and to ensure success of courses in terms of "student attendance and commitment, progress in skills and development of interest in education", Thorne, Morris and Walker (1988:28) say that consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community before, during and after the program is essential. However, there are major differences within Aboriginal Australia, and the goals that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults attach to education are diverse. What may be an appropriate program for one group will not necessarily suit the needs of another (Boughton and Durnan, 1997). Boughton and Durnan (1997) say that adult education providers working within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities should "be sensitive to and able to accommodate the distinct and also diverse Aboriginal aspirations and needs ... as the individuals themselves and the communities define them".

Culturally Appropriate Resources

Educators have long been aware that identity is central to learning (Boughton and Durnan, 1997). That is, knowledge is built from within one's own existence or framework (Boughton and Durnan, 1997). Therefore, all aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, including resources and materials, must reflect the "social and cultural values underpinning Indigenous societies" (National Tertiary Education Industry Union, 1997).

The National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Final Report (1995) found that there was a need for "high quality resources that reflect Indigenous lifestyles and cultures". While this is both time consuming, resource intensive and often limited by funding constraints "best practice requires specific Aboriginal curriculum, not just the customisation of non-Aboriginal curriculum" (Boughton and Durnan, 1997:21). Further, Byrnes (1993:158) says that "learning is maximised when the learner's own experience is respected as valid and regarded as a potential resource for learning".

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people prefer to learn through "real life performance" and experience rather than "practice in contrived conditions" (Langlands, 1988:64). By drawing on the learners' background knowledge, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are able to learn according to real life experiences, allowing them to make connections between what is known and what has to be learnt" (Procter, 1988:226).

Off-Campus Delivery

In their report to the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) regarding Best Practice and Benchmarking in Aboriginal Community-Controlled Adult Education, Boughton and Durnan (1997) discuss the benefits of off-campus delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups. These benefits include people being able to study without leaving their families and communities, and bringing the learning process into a more direct relationship with the experiences of daily life. It enables community involvement, "including mentoring of students and the role of 'elders' in passing on knowledge ... as an integral feature of genuine Aboriginal education" (Boughton and Durnan, 1997).

The National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Final Report (1995) says that statistics show that tertiary education institutions including Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges appear to "provide better, more comfortable environments for many students, where they feel they are being treated like adults (as they are in their own communities)". TAFE colleges need to continue this trend and remain flexible in providing adult education delivery off-campus.

Learning Styles

The Federation of Independent Aboriginal Education Providers (FIAEP) (1996) says that "education is vital if knowledge is to be passed on to future generations". This includes "learning the ways of white people and the ways of other modern world cultures too". However, FIAEP (1996) stresses the importance of the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to learn in their own ways at their own pace.

Australian Aboriginal societies have been, and still are, traditionally oral cultures (Procter, 1988: 222). The National Review (1995: 89) stresses this point and highlights the importance of beginning from "where the learner is at". That is, recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' strengths in non-print forms of communication, extending these strengths and using them as a means in themselves as well as the basis to develop skills and competencies in all areas of learning, including the written form (Procter 1988: 225).

Hughes (1987; cited by Byrnes 1993: 163) suggested some characteristics which could impinge on Aboriginal learning styles including:

- group rather than individual orientation
- spontaneous as opposed to structured approach to learning
- learning by imitation and repetition rather than questioning
- uncritical rather than critical approach to learning and information
- personal versus impersonal
- listening rather than verbalising
- indirect questions in preference to direct questions.

However, while remaining cognisant of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' preferred ways of learning, all learners must first and foremost be viewed as individuals. Loveday and Young (1984; cited by Byrnes 1993: 160) "warn against sweeping generalisations being applied to Aboriginal people, and point out that Aboriginal society is multifaceted".

Methodology

Approval for Stage 2 of the research was obtained simultaneously with Stage 1 approval from the Minjerriba Moorgumpin Elders in Council, North Stradbroke Island Aboriginal and Islander Housing Cooperative and Redland Shire Council.

This was consistent with Stage 1 research finding that:

- *the North Stradbroke Island elders and members of the community be involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of any vocational education and training, adhering to the community's cultural concepts, understandings, values and visions for the future.*

In order to monitor the progress and associated costs of the project, a plan of action was developed detailing a project overview, timeline and budget.

Contact by the Moreton Institute of TAFE Field Officer (Indigenous Programs) was made with the Stradbroke Island community groups. The request for training regarding meeting skills was confirmed and a delivery date set.

The focus of the training was established by the community to address a widespread need and was consistent with Stage 1 research finding that:

- *literacy should be integrated with all vocational education and training.*

A one-day workshop was held in the Learning Centre at One Mile, Dunwich, North Stradbroke Island on Tuesday 18 August. It included various meeting procedures, active participation strategies and a mock meeting.

The venue is consistent with Stage 1 research finding that:

- *situating the delivery of any vocational education and training on North Stradbroke Island would ensure a comfortable, familiar, learning environment and reduce the difficulties associated with transport costs and availability.*

A comprehensive participant workbook reflecting cultural awareness was developed specifically for the workshop. Parts of the workbook have been included as Appendix 1.

This is consistent with Stage 1 research findings that it is necessary to:

- *ensure that teaching resources and/or materials used reflect the specific needs and contexts of the North Stradbroke Island Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.*

The interactive nature of the workshop ensured maximum participation and group support. A relaxed environment was created and peer support was encouraged.

This is consistent with Stage 1 research findings that it is good practice to:

- *establish and encourage a collaborative learning environment through peer tutoring and mentoring.*

Consistency of personnel was maintained for Stage 2 of the research. The facilitators, Lindy Freeman and Christine Seabrook, were the team involved in Stage 1 of the project. They have specialist qualifications in adult literacy and vast experience in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

This is consistent with Stage 1 research findings that:

- *facilitators should possess adult literacy teaching qualifications, have an awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples' preferred learning styles, excellent cross-cultural communication skills and have the ability to use a variety of teaching and assessment strategies.*

Good practice was demonstrated by the facilitators. The teaching/learning cycle (Hammond et al, 1992) was implemented throughout the day: building the context, modelling, guided practice and independent practice (no assessment was undertaken). Specific, contextually-relevant activities made the workshop appropriate and interesting for the participants.

A return visit to North Stradbroke Island occurred four (4) weeks after the workshop in order to gain feedback on the implementation of meeting skills and strategies. Several participants were interviewed.

Demographics

Eighteen (18) members of the Stradbroke Island Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community participated in the workshop. The group comprised eleven (11) female and seven (7) male participants, ranging in age from 16 - 64 years. Participants ranged from full-time students to representatives of various community organisations.

Findings and observations

- There was a high level of interest in the workshop content. Meeting skills are seen as necessary and valuable tools for the community. The Elders expressed a need for the younger members of the community to take a more active role in meetings for the future of the Stradbroke Island Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This led to generous mentoring of the younger participants by the older participants.
- The mock meeting was very interactive with almost all participants demonstrating enthusiastic and appropriate participation. It was heartening to see a normally shy youth with low-self esteem and minimal literacy skills volunteer, in a supportive environment, to chair the mock meeting. The ensuing surprise and delight of the Elders, shared with the facilitators after the workshop, was most pleasing.
- When considering the interactive nature of the day, it was interesting to note that, when it was suggested at times that participants complete activities in pairs or small groups, all participants preferred to work alone.
- Participants asked questions frequently and freely. They were eager to gain advice regarding specific meeting incidences they had encountered and suggested coping strategies for the future.
- Humour was factored into the day's workshop in the interests of good practice, a positive learning environment and participant enjoyment. This proved very successful and undoubtedly contributed to active participation.
- Participant evaluation sheets referred to the following:

  1. the easy-to-read workbook

  Examples:
  - *I liked the easy way of reading and understanding the booklet.*
  - *It set the points out so they were easy to understand.*

  2. the oral information being important

  Example:
  - *I found talking in general helpful.*

  3. the oral information being easy to understand

  Example:
  - *I found all of the talk and explanations very helpful.*

  4. the benefits of the workshop

  Example:
  - *It was all very helpful - we need these skills.*
  - *It was easy to understand.*

- Interview comments from the follow-up visit revealed the following information:
  - *a request for a repeat of the previous workshop at a later date to reinforce learning;*
  - *a request for further meeting workshops to service the needs of other community groups;*
  - *a general increase regarding meeting participation has occurred;*
  - *an improvement in overall meeting procedures has occurred;*
  - *meetings are running more smoothly with fewer interruptions tolerated;*
  - *an increase in interest/willingness to participate actively by the younger members of the community has occurred;*
  - *a re-emphasis of the need for the young members to become involved as they will be responsible for the future of the community.*

Recommendations

Based on the qualitative research data gathered, it is recommended that:

- all training within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on Stradbroke Island be relevant and useful; course content and methodology should result from consultation with the community organisations involved;
- peer tutoring be encouraged to fulfil the need for the younger members of the community to continue the work of the elders;
- a non-threatening learning environment be provided to encourage maximum participation;
- resources be culturally appropriate and designed to reflect the specific needs of the group;
- training providers recognise the importance of oral communication during delivery;
- end-of-course evaluation occur to ensure quality outcomes, beneficial to the community;
- where possible, repeat/review sessions be provided to reinforce previous learning.

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Appendix 1

NOTICE OF MEETING

Model 1:

NOTICE OF MEETING OF THE
DUNWICH PRE-SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

A meeting of the Dunwich Pre-school Association will be held -

DATE: 24 August 1998

TIME: 7.30 pm

PLACE: Dunwich Pre-school

Model 2:

NOTICE OF MEETING OF THE
DUNWICH PRE-SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

A meeting of the Dunwich Pre-school Association will be held on 24 August 1998 at 7.30 pm at the Dunwich Pre-school.

AGENDA (MODEL)

1. Open meeting
2. Welcome
3. Apologies: R. Nelson, P. Sandy
4. Minutes of previous meeting
5. Business arising from minutes: Final funding report
6. Correspondence: Letter received from Redland Shire Council
7. Business arising from correspondence:
   Request for information regarding trainees
8. Reports: Chairperson's report
9. General Business:
   - construction of storage shed;
   - planning of fundraising activities
10. Date, time and place of next meeting
11. Meeting close

ACTIVITY 1

- **Read the information below and perform the activities which follow:**

The monthly meeting of the North Stradbroke Island Rugby League Club Social Committee is held at the clubhouse on the third Monday of each month. The next meeting is set down for 16 November from 1.30 - 3.30 pm. Apologies have been received from two members (Peter Green and Mal Roberts). Ann Saunders has had hip surgery and will be in hospital for several weeks. A letter has been received from North Stradbroke Island High School requesting assistance with fundraising to extend their Assembly Hall. One of our members is anxious that we organise our Christmas Party soon. She has access to lollies and balloons for the kids.

1. You are the Secretary. Write the notice of meeting that you would send out to members.

2. Write an agenda for the meeting.

ACTIVITY 1 - ANSWERS

1. NOTICE OF MEETING

NOTICE OF MEETING OF NORTH STRADBROKE ISLAND RUGBY LEAGUE CLUB SOCIAL COMMITTEE

A meeting of the North Stradbroke Island Rugby League Club Social Committe will be held at the clubhouse on Monday 16 November from 1.30 pm to 3.30 pm.

2. AGENDA

1. Open meeting
2. Welcome
3. Apologies: P. Green, M. Roberts
4. Minutes of previous meeting
5. Business arising from minutes
6. Correspondence: Letter received from North Stradbroke Island High School
7. Business arising from correspondence: Request from North Stradbroke Island High School to assist with fundraising to extend Assembly Hall
8. Reports
9. General Business: - Ann Saunder's hospitalisation (flowers);
   - Social Committee Christmas Party - lollies, balloons
10. Date, time and place of next meeting
11. Meeting close

ACTIVITY 2 (Model)

- **Structure general business items around the following conversation:**

"I'm sick of doing Mark's job. I'm not supposed to be applying for the grant. It's not fair. That's what he gets paid for."

"Yeah, but it has to be done. You can't just leave it."

"I know that. I wish I could talk to him about it. It really browns me off."

"Did you hear the whisper that we're going to have to send our minutes of all our meetings to head office?"

"No I didn't. How did you find out?"

"Jan thought she heard Damien talking to Margie about it."

"No-one will want to take the minutes if we have to do that!"

"Hey, how's Bill from maintenance? That accident should never have happened. There needs to be something done about those steps, don't you think?"

"I dunno. I reckon he wasn't being careful enough."

"That's not it. He didn't get the message from Julie. Someone threw it away before he saw it."

"Really? Anyway, I think he can decide what he wants to do - stay home or take it easy at work. Do you know anything about that sort of thing?"

"No, I don't, but I think we should find out."

ACTIVITY 2

- **Structure general business items around the following conversation:**

"Have you heard who's coming to Straddie next month?"

"No, who?"

"Evonne Goolagong-Cawley. She's coming to talk to our community groups about kids in sport. I'm not sure of the exact date. We'll have to find out."

"Yeah, we will. Oh, I've been meaning to tell you - indigenous health got a big chunk of funding in the Federal Budget this time. We sure need it!"

"I know, that's great, but it's never enough. We still have to find more. I heard there's special funding available through ATSIC. Can we all write the submission at the next community health committee meeting?"

"Sure, sounds like a good idea."

"I want to let everyone know at the next meeting that they're thinking of holding the Festival of the Dreaming in Brisbane. Wouldn't that be great?"

"I'd love to get the chance to go to one of those. They're supposed to be wonderful - it'd be really great if the Bangarra Dance Theatre performed again."

"By the way, there's a lot of talk at the moment about the new publication As a Matter of Fact. Apparently it answers a lot of the myths about indigenous Australians. We should have a copy for work - must order one soon."

"Yeah. Gotta go. See you at the meeting."

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